

Culture-led Regeneration and Spatial Planning

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis critically reviews epistemological and methodological aspects of the application of spatial planning policy for cultural clustering in the UK. The thesis contains four published papers and a critical review of these papers. Particular attention is given to issue of the theoretical and conceptual underpinning with respect to policy for cultural clustering, and in particular the way in which such policy reflects issues of local identity. It is argued that such policy lacks coherent theoretical and conceptual underpinning, and also lacks linkage with local identity. For such reasons, it is argued that policy is frequently potentially sub-optimal or even counter-productive in terms of outcomes. It is further argued that the thesis contributes to the development of the spatial planning discipline by providing new evidence and understanding of the operation of cultural clustering policy and its potential effects.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Identifying the Questions

How can policy for the agglomeration or clustering of cultural uses be reconciled with parallel arguments for dispersal of such uses? To what extent can cultural quarters achieve aims for sustainable economic, social and environmental regeneration? How can the need for linkage to local identity be combined with the need to enhance image in connection with external city marketing priorities? Is the evidence of previous practice used effectively to improve future practice? These are some of the questions that prompted my research and provided the context for it as demonstrated in this thesis.

A central argument of my research (addressed in Chapter Three) in this context is that the application of policy for cultural use clustering, often applied by the mechanism of designation of ‘cultural quarters’, lacks an underpinning of theory and therefore is often flawed in practice. This leads to conceptual confusion for instance in terms of the defining characteristics of cultural quarters as well as the way in which such quarters can be applied so as to maximise regeneration outcomes (particularly in terms of an orientation towards production or consumption). This in turn leads to potentially sub-optimal or even counter-productive applications of such policy. This argument is therefore concerned essentially with the *content* (focus and parameters) and *form* (policy application, for instance either ‘formal’ [statutory] policy or ‘informal’ [non-statutory] policy) of cultural quarters and cultural clustering policy.

A second concern (addressed in Chapter Three), as a refinement of the broader issue of lack of theoretical underpinning for cultural clustering, relates to the potential conflict between aims to reflect local identity and aims for externalised marketing. A potential consequence is that policy frequently implicitly or explicitly prioritises such marketing (for instance by means of image enhancement) as opposed to local identity (for instance by means of a linkage to local communities and history). The result is that such policy in practice may over time erode local distinctiveness, and, in turn economic competitiveness, for instance in terms of visitors and residents attracted. A related issue here is that of agency, since a critical element in this context is the process by which cultural quarters have been applied. This process would often seem to be one of serial

replication, particularly deriving from the (arguably) disproportionate influence of a relatively small number of trans-national cultural intermediaries and consultants. Such serial replication or policy transfer may be compared to more sensitive adaptation of policy which takes account of the peculiarities of context. Furthermore, this issue is related to the minimal role often played by local communities in the process of development and application of such policy. This argument is therefore concerned essentially with the *process* by which cultural quarters and cultural clustering policy is derived and applied.

A third concern of the thesis (addressed in Chapter Two) is to reflect critically on my research approach in terms of the methods used. This flows in part from the concern which gave rise to the research, in terms of the apparent lack of evidence to back up the widespread application of policy for cultural clustering and cultural quarters. In addition, it reflects the need for evidence which is contextually-situated, given that policy such as that for cultural clustering is inevitably embedded in context. It is asserted that in this respect a case study approach is relevant and this forms the basis for the papers considered.

In line with an approach of critical reflection, parts of the ‘critical review’ within this thesis (which is made up of Chapters One, Two and Three) use the first person. This is also commensurate with the accepted need for an awareness of the researcher’s positionality with respect to research.

In order to introduce this thesis, the remainder of this Chapter proceeds as follows. In section 1.2, I set out the aim of the thesis and the objectives that make up this aim. I then outline the content of the thesis, considering the published papers and additional chapters. This section includes a demonstration of the coherence of the published papers, indicating also where the objectives of the thesis are fulfilled.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The work presented in this thesis aims to explain the lack of theory in relation to cultural clustering as applied for instance within spatial planning policy and practice. This aim is built on three objectives as follows. First, it seeks to assess the adequacy of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks which underpin policy and practice with respect to the content and form of policy in relation to cultural clustering and cultural quarters. Second, it seeks to investigate the way in which policy for cultural clustering, as applied for instance in cultural quarters, addresses the issue of local identity. As indicated above, this is linked to the process by which policy for cultural clustering is derived and applied, which is in turn linked to issues of agency for instance in terms of the (influential) role of cultural intermediaries and consultants, and the (more limited) role of local communities. Third, it seeks to review the originality of the work as set out in the published papers, and also to demonstrate its significant contribution to the discipline of spatial planning (for the purposes of this thesis, ‘spatial planning’ is assumed to be congruous with ‘land-use planning’, or ‘town and country planning’), both in terms of the discovery of new facts and the exercise of independent critical power. This is linked to issues of methodology in terms of the research which forms the basis for the papers.

## **1.3 Content and Structure of Thesis**

The above objectives are met through the four published works and three chapters that constitute this thesis. This section sets out an overview of the content of each, in terms of aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions (as required in para. 9.4.1 of Regulation 43 of Heriot-Watt University relating to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Research).

### *1.3.1 Content of Papers (published works)*

Paper One McCarthy, J., 2005, Cultural Quarters and Regeneration: The Case of Wolverhampton, *Planning, Practice and Research*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 297-311.



This paper considers the notion of cultural quarters and sets out the lessons and implications arising from a specific case – that of Wolverhampton’s cultural quarter. It considers two broader conceptual frameworks within which the notion of cultural quarters is embedded. First, it considers the broader conception of the ‘quartering’ of distinct areas within towns and cities for a range of purposes. It shows how such ‘quartering’ can be used to enhance local identity, to enable areas to be more ‘self-sustaining’ by means of use mixing via the creation for instance of urban villages, and to enhance city image via branding so as to enable more effective ‘city marketing’. It also shows how such quartering can be potentially counter-productive in terms of leading to gentrification and fragmentation as well as increased homogeneity. Second, the paper introduces the notion of ‘culture-led regeneration’ which has been applied within many urban contexts throughout the UK and elsewhere as a means of providing a range of economic, social and environmental regeneration outcomes. The paper shows that these two conceptual frameworks coalesce around the notion of cultural quarters as areas where the concentration of cultural uses is encouraged for broad spatial planning and regeneration aims. It unpicks the rationale for such cultural quarters, and disaggregates the various types of such quarter that have been applied by spatial planning and related policy. It also problematises the notion, highlighting its internal contradictions, which derive in part from the contradictions inherent in the two sets of conceptual frameworks which form the basis for cultural clustering. Finally, the paper considers the case of Wolverhampton’s Cultural Quarter, which is used to test the assumptions on which the cultural quarter mechanism is based. The underpinning research was carried out by means of documentary review and structured interviews with key agents, and analysis of the responses provides reflection on the internal contradictions and other conceptual weaknesses of the cultural quarter concept, with implications for cultural quarters in other contexts.

This paper provides data and analysis for the completion of objective one. It also introduces concepts relevant to objective two. By setting the research in the literature, the paper also provides material relevant to objective three.

Paper Two     McCarthy, J., 2006, The Application of Policy for Cultural Clustering: Current Practice in Scotland, *European Planning Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 397-408.

Complementing the focus of paper one, this paper looks critically at the way in which policy for cultural clustering has been applied in Scotland. It shows how the notion of cultural clustering (often involving the cultural quarter mechanism) derives from the 'culture-led regeneration' approach set out in paper one. Like paper one, it appraises the assumptions on which such approaches are based, and the internal contradictions and conceptual weaknesses this involves, and it goes on to show how such approaches are applied in terms of policy for cultural clustering in the Scottish context. Such approaches are shown to lead to the kind of cultural quarters introduced in paper one, comprising quarters designated in 'formal' or statutory spatial planning documents such as development plans. In addition, they may lead to other types of policy mechanism including clusters of cultural activity which are identified in 'informal' or non-statutory policy documents.

The cases of Glasgow and Dundee are then compared in terms of approach to cultural clustering policy, again based on research using documentary analysis and structured interviews with key agents. Analysis of the results indicates that there are major areas of difference between the cases in terms of policy approach and application. It is suggested, furthermore, that such differences derive only in part from differences of contextual circumstance (particularly scale, with the cases chosen to reflect large and small urban areas). This is because each city also appears to have a very different conceptual framework in relation to the principles of cultural clustering, including the specific benefits it affords. Finally, the paper illustrates links with experience in other contexts, including Manchester (analogous to Glasgow in terms of scale) and Wolverhampton (as reflected in paper one, and analogous to Dundee in terms of scale), which also reflect differences and contention in the interpretation of the notion of cultural clustering. Like paper one, this paper concludes that the notion of cultural clustering, as applied for instance by the cultural quarter mechanism, is reductive and under-theorised with persistent internal contradictions and flaws. It suggests a way forward in terms of the disaggregation of the notion of cultural quarters/clusters and related policy, to include a wider array of approaches which reflect different theoretical foundations (including organic and well as top-down methods).

This paper provides further data, interpretation and analysis with respect to objective one, by broadening the consideration of cultural quarters to include informally-designated quarters or clusters. It also considers concepts relevant to objective two. By

setting the research in the literature, the paper also provides material relevant to objective three.

Paper Three    McCarthy, J., 2005, Promoting Image and Identity in ‘Cultural Quarters’: the Case of Dundee, *Local Economy*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 280-293.

Complementing papers one and two, this paper focuses on one aspect of the use of the cultural quarter mechanism, namely the way it reflects notions of local identity, history and culture, as opposed to promoting or imposing a more generic set of elements. In appraising the conceptual frameworks for cultural clustering and cultural quarters, the paper highlights how the prioritisation of image enhancement within cultural quarters may lead to the erosion of identity and the loss of authenticity and distinctiveness, with the resulting homogeneity possibly proving counter-productive in the longer-term, for instance in terms of aims for economic development. In order to test these assertions, the paper examines the development and application of Dundee’s Cultural Quarter. Like papers one and two, it is based upon research using documentary analysis and structured interviews with key actors, in this case including within Dundee City Council. The paper examines the origins and development of Dundee’s Cultural Quarter, the way the Quarter was applied by means of formal spatial policy, and the outcomes attributed to this policy application. Following analysis of these elements, it highlights the critical issues of serial replication (in terms of the way in which the cultural quarter mechanism is transferred between contexts) and the related prioritisation of image enhancement as the key defining strategy. These two factors, the paper suggests, have meant that the cultural quarter mechanism in Dundee has lacked embeddedness in the local context in terms of linkage to identity, thereby missing the opportunity to build upon the city’s strengths and distinctiveness. The role of image enhancement is explored in this context by unpacking the concepts of city image and the ‘re-imaging’ process, with the increasing importance of so-called ‘hard branding’ in cities such as Dundee which have suffered from a poor image historically. This, it is argued, is linked to the creation of new (artificial) forms of identity which leads in turn to the problems outlined previously, particularly loss of distinctiveness. Consequently, the paper concludes that the case of Dundee illustrates the need for cultural quarters to involve greater linkage to local identity rather than promoting generic approaches often based primarily on objectives for image enhancement.

This paper provides data, interpretation and analysis with respect to objective two, by focusing on the issue of local identity as reflected in cultural quarters. It also considers concepts relevant to objective one. In addition, by setting the research in the literature, the paper provides material relevant to objective three.

Paper Four    McCarthy, J., 2006, Regeneration of Cultural Quarters: Public Art for Place Image or Place Identity?, *Journal of Urban Design*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 243-262.

This paper considers the use of public art in cultural quarters. It complements papers one, two and three – particularly the latter, in that it highlights the issue of local identity. Like the previous papers, it sets the context for culture-led regeneration approaches, but then goes on to highlight the use of public art within such approaches. It sets out the way in which such art can achieve aims in terms of regeneration and re-imaging, but also problematises the use of public art in this context by showing how its benefits may be challenged. It stresses the issue of linkage of public art with local identity, and sets this against parallel aims for re-imaging in the context of the ‘hard branding’ of cities as part of city marketing strategies (therefore linking to paper three). In particular, it shows how aims in relation to identity and image may not be compatible. In order to address these issues, it considers the cases of public art in Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter (a ‘formal’ cultural quarter, where a high degree of control and guidance in the application of public art was applied) and Manchester’s Northern Quarter (an ‘informal’ cultural quarter, where a greater degree of flexibility in the application of public art was applied). It sets out the results of research based on documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with key actors, highlighting questions such as whether public art in these contexts aims to address the need to enhance the city’s external image, and/or to reflect an internal image linked to local identity, to what extent such aims are compatible, and whether policy and guidance in relation to public art should be detailed and prescriptive or flexible in orientation. Finally, the paper concludes that objectives for external image enhancement and linkage to local identity in terms of public art can be complementary, and that public art can contribute significantly to culture-led regeneration outcomes. In terms of good practice, it highlights the potential for the use of historical associations in public art, as well as the desirability of detailed guidance and strategies in conjunction with public art, so as to maximise its benefits.

This paper provides data, interpretation and analysis with respect to objective two, by providing an additional focus on the issue of local identity as reflected by the application of public art in cultural quarters. It also considers concepts relevant to objective one. In addition, by setting the research in the literature, the paper provides material relevant to objective three.

### *1.3.2 Chapter Content*

Chapter Two, Methodology, looks critically at the conceptual and empirical basis of papers one to four and the research which underpinned them. This Chapter focuses on the contribution of the case study approach to explaining how cultural quarters are understood by their participants, how they achieve (or do not achieve) regeneration outcomes, and the extent to which policy for cultural quarters and clusters is underpinned by a clear theoretical or conceptual framework. This Chapter provides evidence and argument for the completion of objective three.

Chapter Three shows how the papers previously summarised demonstrate a significant contribution to the expansion of knowledge, and how they show evidence of originality (by either the provision of new facts or the exercise of independent critical power, as specified in para. 9.4.3 of Regulation 43 of HWU in connection with the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Research). In so doing, this Chapter sets the papers in the context of a current understanding of the field. This is demonstrated by consideration of contemporary literature, for instance in relation to how far there is a relevant theoretical underpinning for cultural clustering and cultural quarters, and how the policy and practice of cultural clustering and cultural quarters provides linkage with local context and identity (in line with professed aims for local distinctiveness), as opposed to applying externally-imposed or generic approaches. In terms of the contribution of the four published papers, this Chapter sets out an assessment of the contribution and originality of the four papers by considering three separate, but interlinked, questions, as follows. First, in what way is the relevant evidence contained within the papers new and original? Second, how does the research contained within the papers contribute to the wider development of the field of spatial planning? Third, how does the research demonstrated in the papers show independent critical power? After reviewing the answers to these questions, this Chapter ends with a summary of the

implications of my research for good practice. This Chapter therefore provides evidence and argument for the completion of objectives one, two and three.

### *1.3.3 Coherence of Papers*

There are several ways in which the papers summarised above (in *1.3.1*) can be seen to form a single body of work with clear coherence. In this section, I set out the thematic, conceptual and methodological bases for the papers, and I argue that the similarities and consistencies of treatment demonstrate that, together, the papers form a coherent body of work (as required in para. 9.4.2 of Regulation 43 of HWU in connection with the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Research).

The first commonality is in theme, which is related to the position of the papers within the wider literature. In this respect, all the papers fall within the disciplinary field of spatial planning and policy, which overlaps with wider fields such as human geography and the social sciences. The explicit focus of all the papers is the application of policy for cultural clustering within UK cities, typically through the development and application of formally-designated ‘cultural quarters’ which are intended to encourage further concentration of such uses in these areas, in order to achieve outcomes in relation to economic, social and environmental regeneration. Papers one and two address the theme of cultural quarters and cultural clustering policy, and they highlight inherent tensions, contradictions and inconsistencies in the development and application of such policy, as well as in its theoretical underpinning. Paper three focuses on the issue of cultural quarters and local identity, and paper four extends the issue of identity to the specific consideration of public art within cultural quarters, in terms of how such art can be used to achieve specific objectives arising from the broader aims of the cultural quarters in which they are situated.

The papers are complementary since paper one focuses on the issue of formally-designated (in spatial plans) cultural quarters, within the broader framework of the ‘quartering’ of cities in part for the purposes of city marketing, while paper two considers a broader set of mechanisms based on cultural clustering, including informally-designated and non-site-specific cultural clusters. Papers three and four continue with the theme of cultural quarters, but focus on the complementary issue of

linkage with local identity and the potential conflict in this respect with aims for city marketing and 're-imaging' primarily for an external audience. They consider how the prioritisation of image at the expense of identity may lead to loss of distinctiveness, a key concern of cities for economic development. Like papers one and two, these papers highlight the internal contradictions and inconsistencies in the way that policy is understood, justified and applied. They also highlight links to consideration of agency, in terms of explaining how policy is transferred. Furthermore, all the papers consider to an extent the role of key agents and their inter-relationships, together with broader structural considerations for instance in terms of governance.

All the papers draw on research that I conducted within the UK, between 2000 and 2007. This derives in part from a research grant from the Carnegie Institute for the Universities of Scotland, for a project entitled 'Cultural Quarters for Urban Regeneration: a comparison of practice in the UK' (for papers one, two and three), and in part from a research grant from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Dundee for a project entitled 'Environmental Art and Local/Regional Identities: experience in 'cultural quarters' of UK cities' (for paper four). The literature review sections of the papers highlight common concerns in terms of the theory and practice of cultural clustering within spatial planning policy.

There are also methodological similarities in terms of the research considered in the papers. These similarities relate to the policy-oriented concerns of all the papers, and the intensive and qualitative approach applied in each. Specifically, the research on which each of the papers is based applies a case study approach, with documentary analysis of secondary data as well as analysis of primary data arising from semi-structured interviews (Chapter Two considers this approach in more detail). Hence paper one considers a case study of Wolverhampton, paper two compares case studies of Glasgow and Dundee, paper three considers a case study of Dundee, and paper four compares case studies of Belfast and Manchester. In addition to the similarities in terms of approach, there is also similarity in the conceptual basis of the papers, as indicated above, which provides the frame within which the case studies are located. Hence paper one addresses the broad conceptual framework of the 'quartering' of cities (for the purposes of marketing as well as spatial planning); paper two considers the concept of cultural clustering (as applied in policy for 'informal' as well as 'formal' cultural clusters or quarters); paper three considers the concept of local identity (as addressed by

policy for cultural quarters); and paper four considers concepts of image and identity (as applied by means of public art within cultural quarters).

Essentially, therefore, the same analytical approach is developed in each paper, namely the consideration of appropriate analytical and conceptual frameworks; the critical re-interpretation of appropriate secondary data, including policy documents; and the critical interpretation of new (primary) data. Moreover, there is a clear complementarity in terms of the conceptual and empirical content of the papers, with clear development in terms of emphasis and focus. There is therefore a natural coherence between the papers in all respects.

#### **1.4 Structure of thesis**

The thesis continues with the principal published papers, referred to above as papers one to four, and each of these has its own list of references. Chapters Two and Three follow, and comprise the ‘critical review’ of the four papers. Finally, a separate reference list for Chapters Two and Three is provided.



# **PAPER ONE**

## **CULTURAL QUARTERS AND REGENERATION: THE CASE OF WOLVERHAMPTON**

Published in 2005 in *Planning Practice and Research*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 297-311.

### **Introduction**

In recent decades, cities throughout the UK have increasingly looked to culture-related uses to help bring about regeneration outcomes (Landry *et al*, 1996). The UK Government has also taken a pro-active stance to the encouragement of cultural industries (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999), and local authority cultural regeneration strategies have been encouraged (Scottish Executive, 2000). A range of policy approaches has been applied locally, including the widespread designation of 'cultural quarters', often within a broader set of 'city quarters'. However, such approaches to regeneration may be contested, since they may result in negative effects such as erosion of distinctiveness, and there is confusion over the rationale for, and potential of, cultural quarters in particular. This article uses a case study of Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter to explore the questions of why and how such mechanisms are applied, and what is their potential in terms of delivery of regeneration outcomes. In so doing, the article problematises the notion of cultural quarters, which all too often forms part of an under-theorised orthodoxy of practice, transmitted by a process of serial replication. The article is structured as follows. First, conceptual frameworks relevant to city quartering, culture-led regeneration and 'cultural quarters' are considered; second, a case study of Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter is set out; third, an analysis of the critical issues and problems is provided; and finally, broad conclusions are suggested of relevance to policy and practice elsewhere.

### **City quartering, culture-led regeneration and cultural quarters**

The notion of cultural quarters can only be adequately conceptualised within the framework of a broader conception of the development and promotion of distinct social and spatial areas – 'quarters' or 'urban villages' – which have become highly contested as a consequence of debates around issues of commodification, identity,

homogenisation and gentrification. Such issues are the focus of increasing collections of academic discourse (see for instance Bell and Jayne [2004], a special edition of *Local Economy* including Wilks-Heeg and North [2004], and a special edition of *Urban Studies* including Evans [2005]). It is therefore necessary to unpack the rationale for such ‘quartering’ before proceeding to consider the special case of ‘cultural quarters’. Essentially, such ‘quartering’ is seen to bring benefits such as a sense of collective belonging or enhanced local social identity which can enhance feelings of social inclusion (Bell and Jayne, 2004), and, perhaps of greater urgency, a means to enhance image via branding or re-branding in order to attract mobile capital and visitor income in the context of globalising forces and city competition (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2004). In addition, ‘urban villages’ are seen to provide benefits for urban living in the form of mixed uses and a capacity to be self-sustaining (Murray, 2004).

There is a paradox here, however, in that, as increasing numbers of cities promote city quarters in this way, as seen for instance in the promotional material produced by Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle, such actions may reduce the very heterogeneity that is a unique selling point for many cities (Bell and Jayne, 2004). In addition, the benefits of such quartering are uneven – essentially because tourists are often from higher-income sectors of society, and gentrification is often the result. City quartering may also increase the fragmentation of the city, since proximity does not imply sharing of values or even compatibility. Moreover, it may involve what Miles (2004, p. 40) calls ‘variable voluntariness’ since residents of the gentrified city may be there from choice while residents of adjacent ‘quarters’ may not. Furthermore, such quartering may residualise those not in *any* quarter. It may also be seen as the purification or sanitisation of urban space, leading to contestation on the part of those who may not wish to be (or wish their cities to be) sanitised.

The notion of cultural quarters also draws upon ideas of ‘culture-led’ regeneration, in which cultural activity is the prime catalyst for regeneration outcomes (Evans, 2005). ‘Culture-led’ approaches to regeneration can lead to economic diversification (Williams, 1997; Scott, 1999), involving stimulation of innovation and creativity (Roberts, 2002; Mommaas, 2004), high quality employment (Scott, 2004), retention of income in a locality (Williams, 1997; Richards, 2001a), and promotion of partnership working (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999). They can also contribute to ‘place marketing’ through image enhancement which in turn encourages inward

investment within a context of globalised competition (Ashworth and Voogt, 1990; Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1995; Fitzsimons, 1995; 1996; Williams, 1997, Florida, 2004). In addition, such approaches can bring increased participation in the arts and cultural activity which can encourage co-operation, cultural understanding, and social integration and cohesion, particularly in cities where the population is relatively diverse and fragmented (Matarasso, 1997; Thompson, 2002; Miles, 2005). Such effects may also be linked to reductions in crime (Comedia, 1991; Ebert, Gnad & Kunzmann, 1994), and more sustainable development (Darlow, 1996).

As a result of the perceived benefits of identified city quarters, and culture-led regeneration approaches, 'cultural quarters' have often been pursued where a critical mass' of culture-related activity is seen as providing the basis for further concentration so as to achieve regeneration outcomes. Such quarters may be designated in a formal, statutory spatial plan and accompanied by associated land use policies. The very ubiquity of such quarters is now itself a focus for attention: as Dungey (2004, p. 411) suggests, 'No major town or city's plans for regeneration is now complete without a designated cultural quarter, seeking to attract and develop knowledge economy industries in entertainment, arts, media and design'. In addition, Zukin (1995, p. 22) indicates that 'every well-designed downtown has a mixed-use shopping center and a nearby artists' quarter'. There is a wide range of approaches to developing cultural quarters (Williams, 1997; Scott, 2004; Evans, 2004), but essentially, cultural quarters may be production- or consumption-led. Within production-led 'cultural industry quarters' (such as Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter) benefits are seen to derive from job creation (for instance through provision of workspaces to encourage the operation of cultural industries), attraction of tourists, enhancement of quality of life for residents, and attraction of inward investment. On the other hand, consumption-led quarters (such as Gateshead Quays) may involve large-scale 'flagship' projects incorporating cultural services and uses, and centred on the enhancement of city image.

In all cases, concentration of culture-related uses may lead to synergy, use complementarity, agglomeration economies or minimisation of amenity loss (Evans, 2001, Richards 2001b). In production-oriented quarters, beneficial effects arise from clustering of cultural uses (Porter, 1990), since creative industries depend upon face-to-face contacts, creative industries show a strong proclivity to spatial clustering (Pratt, 1996; Richards, 2001b; Scott, 2004). Clustering can also engender an innovative milieu

(Scott, 1999), feelings of social solidarity (Mommaas, 2004), and the development of partnership (Newman and Smith, 2000). In consumption-oriented quarters, use complementarities or synergies may be developed, with benefits arising from an increased range of uses (Johnson, 1996).

Nevertheless, the notion of cultural quarters is problematic, both in principle and in practice. Most fundamentally, there is a lack of agreement on basic concepts and aims. For instance, some authors specify necessary conditions for cultural quarters in terms of built form (Montgomery, 1993; 2003; 2004) or design-related elements (Wansborough and Mageean, 2003), though many designated cultural quarters fail to satisfy such conditions. In terms of advocacy of good practice, some authors prioritise a consumption orientation (Williams, 1997), some a production orientation (Crewe, 1996; Scott, 2000), while others suggest the need for 'cross-over' between production and consumption (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000; Williams 1997; Montgomery, 1995; 2003) or point to the wide variety of choice available along the production-consumption spectrum (Newman and Smith, 2000). In addition, many of the aims of cultural quarters are potentially oppositional or contradictory, leading to an 'ad hoc blending of arguments and opportunities' (Mommaas, 2004, p. 530). Moreover, in terms of consumption-oriented quarters, the notion of concentration or clustering is fraught with problems, since there are contrary arguments for dispersal, for instance in the form of small initiatives such as neighbourhood-based arts facilities (Evans, 2001). This represents the opposite of the ethos of cultural quarters. Linked to this is the notion that investment in and attention to cultural uses and clustering may privilege wealthier tourists (Wilks-Heeg and North, 2004). Even with an acceptance of the merits of clustering of cultural production, it may be argued that many types of sector synergies are only feasible within the context of large cities (Scott, 2004), but this does not explain or justify the emergence of cultural industry quarters in smaller cities and towns throughout the UK. Furthermore, it is important to note that many of the more successful cultural clusters developed in a spontaneous and organic fashion.

This is linked to the question of whether cultural quarters can be induced by public intervention. In the context of cultural production, Griffiths (2005) suggests that formal designation in spatial planning terms reflects a 'technocratic mentality of order and control' (5), while a more 'organic', 'bottom-up' or 'vernacular' approach may be more appropriate. This is endorsed by Shorthose (2004) who shows how the Lace Market in

Nottingham developed as a *de facto* cultural quarter by gradual organic growth, resulting in a 'convivial ecology' made up of informal networks. Certainly, spatial planning or zoning approaches to cultural clustering may by-pass the importance of economic and social interaction by reflecting a predilection for the 'fetishism of space' as well as a focus on the built environment, while neglecting social and economic networks (Evans, 2004). Garcia (2004) suggests that 'organic' approaches were preferred to more formal approaches by creative entrepreneurs in Glasgow, and such an approach may also be more likely to encourage partnership, reflecting local aspirations and bringing a sense of ownership (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2004). Thus a reductive or mechanistic approach to policy for cultural quarters may prove counter-productive in terms of discouraging the spontaneous development of cultural uses (Wilks-Heeg and North, 2004): as Kunzmann (2004, p. 399) asserts, 'One thing planners should resist is zoning for culture and creativity. This would be counter-productive'.

The influence of agency is also of relevance here, since this is linked to the process of serial replication in the designation of such quarters, which appears to have exacerbated the problems of homogeneity between cities seeking to achieve essentially the same results. It may be argued that this process is linked to the involvement of a small number of globally-active consultants or cultural mediators (Evans, 2005). While this may have allowed the dissemination of good practice, it may also have contributed to the propensity for the replication or emulation of solutions or suggestions incorporating an essentially similar mix of elements in very different contexts, with the associated risk of homogeneity and loss of local identity or distinctiveness (McCarthy, 2005). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the advice given by such agents would have to be interpreted and applied by local authorities and municipalities, who also shape the parameters within which such agents work.

Hence the benefits arising from the application of city quartering, and the particular use of the cultural quarter mechanism, are contended and problematic. When combined with evidence of serial replication of the cultural quarter policy mechanism, this may indicate the uncritical application of policy transfer, as opposed to the application of evidence-based policy. In order to test such contentions, it is now intended to explore the origins of, rationale for, and perceptions of the potential of, Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter (the focus is on potential rather than outcomes in view of the limited time that has elapsed since designation). The research on which this case study is based

was carried out by means of documentary analysis as well as semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the policy community, comprising land-use planning officers, senior arts administrators and town centre management officers.

## **Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter**

### *Background and policy origins*

Wolverhampton is a city in the English midlands with a population of 239,000. It developed as a prosperous market town which expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century as an industrial centre of textile manufacturing. More recently, it has suffered from deindustrialisation and urban decline in a similar way to many other cities. This is reflected to an extent in the relatively poor image of the city, exacerbated by major road infrastructure developments in recent decades, particularly a ring road that has created a barrier between different areas of the town centre (Donaldsons and URBED, 1994). However, the city has a significant legacy of imposing Victorian buildings including the Grand Theatre and Art Gallery, and it has developed a specialism in entertainment uses, particularly nightclubs, partly as a result of the large student population. This had become evident by the mid-1990s, when the city centre began to attract visitors from throughout the region, and it was estimated that in the 1990s up to 25,000 visitors could be attracted to Wolverhampton on Friday and Saturday nights.

The origins of the Cultural Quarter are linked to this entertainment orientation, since the area comprising the present Cultural Quarter area was defined as a 'Leisure and Entertainment Area' in the 1993 Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (Wolverhampton City Council, 1993). The intention of this designation was to broaden the uses in the city centre away from retail and office uses to include leisure and entertainment uses, thereby encouraging use mixing and diversity, and expanding the evening economy. The area was seen as appropriate for such uses because of the concentration of leisure uses including pubs, restaurants and nightclubs, and the proximity of key transport infrastructure including the town centre bus station, railway station and public car parks. It was therefore intended to encourage further concentration of leisure-related uses in this area, and Policy TC6 states that 'Planning permission will normally be granted for new leisure, recreational, cultural and social

uses in the Town Centre, subject to other Plan proposals' (Wolverhampton City Council, 1993, p.118). In order to implement these policies, the City Council produced publicity material outlining the availability of grant aid to encourage refurbishment schemes and achieve a high quality of design in the area – promoted as the 'Entertainment Quarter', and it also made a commitment to promote street activities and continue its programme of street and environmental improvements.

A key point in the development of the present Cultural Quarter policy was the Wolverhampton Town Centre Audit (Donaldsons and URBED, 1994), which highlighted the potential for further provision of arts, culture and entertainment facilities in the town centre, appealing particularly to young people, and drawing on a wide catchment area. It concluded that the potential benefits of such uses was not being maximised, and suggested the need for a greater crossover between shopping and culture-related facilities, the creation of an image of creativity, more attractions for families in the day time and evening, and environmental improvements. It also recommended the renaming of the Entertainment Quarter as a 'Cultural Quarter', and the incorporation of a 'percent for art' policy. Consequently, the Wolverhampton Town Centre Action Plan (Wolverhampton City Council, 1996) proposed new lighting and introduction of street activities, and provision of an entertainments guide to the area. This represented an acknowledgement of the need to move towards a synthesis of entertainment- and culture-related uses, and in the subsequent Unitary Development Plan the Quarter was re-named as a Cultural Quarter.

An important part of this process of transition away from leisure and entertainment and towards culture-related uses arose from the problem of over-dominance of licensed premises in the area. This was linked to the dominance of the large breweries in facility provision, and burgeoning growth and competition in this sector in the early 1990s. While the city had been successful in developing an entertainment cluster at the expense of other parts of the region including Birmingham city centre, this led to social problems including under-age drinking and increased incidence of crime. As a result, many people, particularly those not attracted by the youth-oriented leisure mix, were deterred from visiting the city centre in the evening. The City Council recognised the need for more effective management of the town centre, which led to the development of the Town Centre Forum, a broad-ranging partnership with the police playing a major role. The transition to a 'culture' orientation was intended to attract a broader age range

including families, by expanding the role and function of much of the town centre, which it was assumed would ensure a safer environment by increasing street activity particularly in the evening. Consequently the present Cultural Quarter – a slightly enlarged version of the Entertainment Quarter – is designated in Wolverhampton’s latest Unitary Development Plan (Wolverhampton City Council, 2004).

### *Policy application*

The Cultural Quarter is one of a number of overlapping quarters in the city centre, with the aim of building on their distinctive characteristics to create foci for regeneration within an integrated whole. These quarters include the Shopping Quarter, the University Quarter, St. John’s Urban Village, Chapel Ash-All Saints/Royal Hospital, and the Canalside Quarter. For each of these areas, a vision and set of proposals has been developed in order to enhance their functions and create a broad use mix that complements the overall functions of the city centre (Wolverhampton City Council, 2004). Wolverhampton City Council’s City Centre Strategy and Action Plan (Wolverhampton City Council, 2005b) also reflect the quartering approach, stressing the individual identity and character in each quarter. Each is shown to be based on an area which can be covered in comfortable walking distance, and coheres around either specific activities or a neighbourhood with working, living and shopping all occurring together. The quartering approach is set out as the basis for land use policy in terms of strengthening the identity of the city centre and its constituent parts.

The stated rationale for the area designated as the Cultural Quarter relates to its concentration of existing leisure and cultural uses, the presence of premises suitable for refurbishment, re-use or redevelopment, its central location with easy access, and its historical and architectural importance. In terms of associated policy, Policy CC7 states that ‘The Cultural Quarter ... will continue to be the focus for leisure, cultural and artist activities in the City Centre. The role and function of the Quarter will be maintained and expanded’ (Wolverhampton City Council, 2004, p.258). The Quarter is therefore intended to attract tourists as well as provide a basis for cultural industries, and new jobs and businesses are seen as a priority. The Cultural Quarter is seen as complementing other retail uses both within and outside the Quarter, and it is seen to link particularly with the Shopping Quarter (the retail core), and the University Quarter. Within the Cultural Quarter, it is intended to maintain and enhance the overall



environment, upgrade pedestrian routes, and provide new public spaces (Wolverhampton City Council, 2004).

In addition, an 'Artists' Quarter', within the Cultural Quarter, is indicated in the UDP, though it was first designated in 2002 in an updated Town Centre Action Plan. This small area, dominated by the narrow Princess Alley, is intended to provide an affordable living and working community for artists and craftspeople, and create a visitor attraction. Specific proposals for the Quarter include conversion of vacant upper floors to artists' workspace / studios, crafts workshops or arts / culture related uses, the encouragement of mixed uses, the upgrading of key pedestrian routes, and the environmental enhancement of public spaces (Wolverhampton City Council, 2003). The 2004 Unitary Development Plan also encourages the sensitive refurbishment and conversion of property to reflect the needs of artists, and the re-use of upper floors (Wolverhampton City Council, 2004). The rationale for the area chosen for the Artists' Quarter was the proximity to existing facilities, though the trigger for the initiative was the presence of vacant premises above an Indian restaurant, for which grant aid was provided via the Single Regeneration Budget, for the conversion of residential units into artists' studios with protected rents. A further building was subsequently refurbished and a wine bar attracted to the area.

Other policy statements also relate to the Cultural Quarter. In particular, the origin of the Cultural Quarter in leisure uses is acknowledged in Wolverhampton City Council's Action Plan for the evening economy (Wolverhampton City Council, 2005a), which shows that the main concentrations of such uses – particularly pubs and bars – largely falls within the present Cultural Quarter. The Action Plan highlights the associated problems of alcohol-related violent crime, with incidence growing since 2000 in line with the number of licensed premises and visitors. The limited range of other leisure facilities is also noted, and the Plan therefore aims to encourage more restaurants and cafes, and, significantly, to ensure that the quarters approach established in the UDP is followed. It also recommends a series of management issues aimed at ameliorating problems such as litter, noise and crime. In addition, the Wolverhampton Partnership, an umbrella stakeholder group, has set out a strategy for the creative industries (Wolverhampton Partnership, 2004) which seeks to address the needs for employment growth and business development as well as enhancement of the creative milieu, with proposals for enhanced marketing, encouragement of living/working space within new

residential developments, and encouragement of temporary use of vacant buildings awaiting redevelopment for studio space in connection with creative industries.

### *Perceptions and evidence of potential*

The evidence and opinion in relation to outcomes achieved within the Cultural Quarter/Artists' Quarter, and the potential for future achievements, is mixed, though it must be acknowledged that relatively little time has elapsed since designation. In terms of the uses within the Cultural Quarter, many of the flagship facilities are long-established, but a recent development of note is the Chubb Buildings scheme for which the original buildings, dating from 1890, were used for the manufacture of locks and safes, though they have now been converted to provide starter studios with a number of multimedia small and medium-sized enterprises, bars, a restaurant and an art gallery. The anchor organisation in the development of the Chubb Buildings was the Light House, set up in 1986 as a partnership between the University (then Polytechnic) and the Leisure Services Department of the City Council, and the first tenants to the units were established in 1991. However, while this development has grown significantly in importance in recent years, and has become an important creative industries node, its progress did not result from the designation of the Cultural Quarter.

An important issue in terms of the potential effectiveness of the Cultural Quarter is its relationship with surrounding quarters. The view of the planning department of the city council on this issue is that the overlapping and cross-functional nature of the set of quarters in the city centre is critical to their collective success; in terms of the Cultural Quarter in particular, the close links with the University Precinct and the Shopping Quarter, they suggest, implies the potential of the Cultural Quarter to overcome possible deficiencies of scale and isolation from other parts of the city centre (personal communication). In terms of designation of the Cultural Quarter itself, one planning officer suggested that the overall attractiveness of the town centre had been enhanced partly as a result of the culture-related uses that have been encouraged in recent years in the Quarter, and that the shift away from purely leisure-oriented uses would seem to have contributed to the new residential uses established in areas adjacent to the town centre, as well as above retail premises in the Cultural Quarter itself (personal interview). In addition, a senior arts administrator suggested that designation of the Cultural Quarter would seem to have enhanced bids for funding culminating for

instance in the grant award for the Art Gallery extension, linked to the Art and Design Faculty of the University and the need to maintain the town's reputation for art applied to manufacturing uses (personal interview). The Art Gallery extension is a flagship project within the Cultural Quarter, and the expansion of the area in 2006 is intended to cement links with local art education and the history of applied arts in manufacturing in the area. Expansion will bring further storage and exhibition space for the established collections in relation to 'pop art', an established specialism of the Gallery.

However, the senior arts administrator also suggested that overall there had been little or no additionality arising from designation of the Cultural Quarter, since no major cultural icons or 'flagship' facilities had been attracted as a result, and new entertainment-related uses would have come anyway (personal interview). She also indicated that there was little potential for support for the Cultural Quarter on the part of practising artists, in view of their distrust of 'branding' exercises as well as what might be seen as the commodification of culture within the area (personal interview). A town centre management officer pointed out that designation of the Cultural Quarter might even be counter-productive if it diverted attention from broader issues such as the need for a 'clean and safe' focus (personal interview). In addition, the senior arts administrator suggested that the grant-led nature of some initiatives in the Quarter might act as a distraction from the achievement of broader aims, and such an approach might be time-limited if grant aid was withdrawn. This applied in particular to the Artists' Quarter, where funding for initial refurbishment was discontinued, and this was linked to raised expectations which were not fulfilled, leading to disappointment and disenchantment (personal interview). Moreover, a planning officer acknowledged that the Artists' Quarter had proved disappointing in view of the lack of private sector investment, and it has not been possible to establish an 'anchor' use for the Quarter (personal interview). While SRB funding enabled environmental improvements and the creation and occupation of six artists' workspace units and two live/work studios, an artist working in the area indicated that there were concerns over blurring of distinctions between studio and residential space (personal interview). Nevertheless, at the time of writing (2005), a major environmental improvement scheme in the Artists' Quarter was being carried out, and the longer-term aspirations for the Quarter remain in place.

Progress in achieving aims for the Cultural Quarter may also be affected by a proposal for designation of a Creative Industries Area, broadly aligned to the present Cultural

Quarter. The Wolverhampton Creative Industries Forum, a partnership of organisations with an interest in the creative industries including the City Council, the University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton College and the Lighthouse Media Centre, commissioned consultants in 2005 to consider such an Area. This Area would be used as a mechanism that could assist and encourage the introduction and expansion of creative industries. Specifically, as indicated by a City Council planning officer, the Creative Industries Area would be a tool to access funding via the Local Economic Growth Initiative (LEGI) and via a current THI (Townscape Heritage Initiative) scheme in the area; this could help bring about the refurbishment of properties for cultural uses which could in turn prevent artists and others leaving the area or premises elsewhere (personal interview).

## **Analysis**

This case of policy for city quartering and cultural clustering illuminates many of the fundamental issues and questions set out previously with respect to these policy areas. In terms of the broad nature of city quartering, the spatial policy documentation relies for justification on broad notions of the need to reinforce the role of the city centre and encourage regeneration foci by strengthening the identity of each quarter. The assumption must be that a primary aim relates to city branding, which, as indicated previously, may be seen as derivative and potentially harmful to overall identity and distinctiveness. In terms of the wider use of city quarters, the Wolverhampton City Centre Strategy and Action Plan (Wolverhampton City Council, 2005a) highlights the need to provide a more proactive marketing strategy that may be informed by the strategies of cities such as Birmingham and Manchester that make use of city quarters. However, the use of such models from elsewhere may be argued to fail to take into account major differences in context, particularly scale.

The issue of scale also applies within Wolverhampton's the Cultural Quarter, in terms of the extent to which a critical mass of culture-related uses can be achieved. On this issue there are contrasting arguments. On the one hand, such a critical mass may be argued to present a necessary condition for the efficient functioning of a cultural quarter, and the perceived under-performance of the Artists' Quarter would seem to be linked in part to the small scale of the area. Furthermore, while Wolverhampton has key areas of relative strength (compared to other sectors in the city) in several creative

industry sectors, these are still weak in comparison to the equivalent in cities such as Manchester and Birmingham. This is related to the arguments of observers such as Scott (2004) that, while policies for cultural clustering may be justified in the context of larger cities, many such policies and interventions are not sustainable at a smaller scale. This in turn calls into question the very notion that the lessons of cultural policy are transferable (Wilks-Heeg and North, 2004), especially where there are major differences in context. On the other hand, any perceived inadequacies of scale within the Cultural Quarter would seem to be ameliorated by the functional links to other (overlapping) quarters within the city centre. This issue of scale is also linked to Wolverhampton's assumption of the need for cultural uses to be maintained centrally. As indicated above, there are parallel arguments for dispersal of cultural facilities, particularly in relation to inclusiveness (Evans, 2001); however, in the case of Wolverhampton, there is a rationale for the maintenance of centralised cultural facilities in terms of the size of the city and the effect on viability, and the importance of transport links.

An important aim of the Cultural Quarter in Wolverhampton would seem to be associated – as with the broader notion of city quartering – to place branding and image enhancement. However, the question may be posed: why was the particular approach taken to the Cultural Quarter pursued, as distinct from one of the many other possible orientations for cultural quarters or cultural clustering? This may be linked to the absence of detailed proposals in relation to a cultural quarter within the original feasibility study (Donaldsons and URBED, 1994). This suggests the need for a broader array of possibilities to be considered in such cases, and the argument remains that the differences that exist between approaches to cultural clustering between UK cities lack a clear basis in terms of linkage to local context and aspiration. Moreover, the Wolverhampton case highlights problems indicated above in terms of the necessary conditions for cultural quarters. This is because, in this case, a tacit assumption seems to be that a production and consumption element within the panoply of culture-related uses is necessary for the Quarter to function effectively. However, this is not articulated in terms of a clear rationale, and it conflicts with very different assumptions relating to cultural quarters in cities such as Sheffield and Glasgow which display a clear production orientation (McCarthy, 2004). The key point here is that such differences are not explained by differences in local context and aspiration, since they relate to the core principles of cultural quarters.

In addition, the application of the cultural quarter mechanism in Wolverhampton seems to have been relatively mechanistic in view of the retention of much of the boundary of the original Entertainment Quarter. This suggests that, notwithstanding the city's strengths in creative industries such as animation and new media, general media, music and crafts and design, a core element of the generating capacity of the Cultural Quarter is linked to entertainment. Indeed, this is reflected in the Unitary Development Plan itself, which asserts that a major strength of the area is its renown for the quality of entertainment and associated venues. Yet this may be seen to be at odds with the evidence of conflicts between cultural uses and entertainment uses, and the barriers to regeneration that such conflicts present, as indicated by the continued (and worsening) problems related to alcohol consumption. Moreover, the potential exclusivity of a strategy or practice that allows the dominance of alcohol-related uses is highlighted by Chatterton and Unsworth (2004), who show how groups such as children, the elderly, poorer people, women and minority ethnic groups may all be in some way excluded from the city centre, at least on occasions such as Friday and Saturday nights. Thus the case of Wolverhampton may be seen to support Mommaas's (2004) argument that cultural clustering policy mechanisms are often sub-optimal or even counter-productive, since they derive from the opportunistic use of disparate and potentially conflicting elements.

The Wolverhampton case also illuminates the issue of agency and the linked notion of serial replication in the application of policy. As indicated above, notions of city quartering in the city would seem to have been transferred, with limited rationale and major asymmetries in terms of scale, leading to arguments of inappropriate transfer between contexts. Such arguments may also be applied in case of the Cultural Quarter, in line with the transfer of policy in other cases (McCarthy, 2004). Thus the emulation of perceived good practice may arise from a misjudgement of the potential for policy transfer. The factors of process and agency would seem to have operated in a similar way in Wolverhampton to other cases, with the outsourcing of a feasibility study and the application of measures applied elsewhere, albeit with conclusions in relation to re-naming of the Entertainment Quarter rather than clear recommendations in terms of detailed application of a cultural quarter. As in other cases, this may be problematic in terms of potential homogenisation and loss of distinctiveness. This adds to arguments for the need for a greater awareness of the spectrum of possibilities for culture-led regeneration and cultural clustering, as opposed to what may be seen as the reductive

application of ‘cultural quarters’. This could arguably encourage the more sophisticated matching of local needs and aspirations with available policy mechanisms.

Yet such an extension of the current range of policy itself presents problems, as indicated previously, in that there are parallel arguments for the incapacity of formal policy in relation to cultural use clustering, such as that within the arena of spatial planning, to bring about net beneficial regeneration effects (Kunzmann, 2004; Wilks-Heeg and North, 2004). While the spatial planning policy applied in the case of Wolverhampton’s Cultural Quarter is at a somewhat abstract level – for instance in terms of continuing the leisure and cultural focus, and creating new jobs and businesses – the crucial issue is the very designation of the Quarter with a clear and defined boundary. As an arts administrator asserted, such branding of the area is antagonistic to the wishes of many cultural practitioners who perceive such action as inimical to creativity (personal interview), and it may be seen to run contrary to the evidence in other areas where an ‘organic’ approach is achieved only in the absence of a defined boundary. This suggests the need for more focused research on the ‘consumers’ of such policy, such as creative industry practitioners, within such quarters. Moreover, it may be argued that development of networks of cultural practitioners in Wolverhampton could assist in encouraging greater take-up of opportunities in terms of artists’ workspace provision in the Artists’ Quarter, for instance. This supports the view of observers such as Shorthose (2004), Evans (2004) and Garcia (2004) that there is a need for formal policy to be supplemented or even supplanted by less-formal encouragement of the ‘bottom-up’ development of networks and partnerships.

A related argument concerns the way in which a spatial orientation on the part of policy makers may fail to address the need for related policy in terms of broadly non-spatial aspects such as crime and economic development. However, the recent development of policy in Wolverhampton would seem not to support this, with clear articulation of policy in relation to the evening economy (Wolverhampton City Council, 2005a) and broader strategy for the creative industries (Wolverhampton Partnership, 2004). However, the case study does appear to illustrate the need for clearer integration between such policy areas, in order to address potential conflicts such as those between entertainment- and culture-related uses as outlined above. In relation to the increasing incidence of alcohol-related crime, the need for broader management of the town centre to control 24-hour uses was acknowledged by the City Council, and CCTV was

installed, which reduced problems of crime (personal interview with town centre management officer). Nevertheless, the persistence of under-age drinking has led to suggestions for greater regulation and enforcement in the Cultural Quarter. Thus a clearer integration of policy – both physical and management-related – would seem to be necessary, with clear links to town centre management. This can also be seen to apply in a number of other cases, particularly where there is a fragmented institutional context (McCarthy, 2006).

The need to enhance policy integration also implies the need to ensure the participation of all stakeholders as part of the broader management of the Quarter. While lack of engagement by some stakeholders, despite the actions of the Town Centre Forum, may have initially deterred take-up of artists' workspaces in the Artists' Quarter (personal interview with planning officer), there has been clear progress in Wolverhampton in terms of such engagement. In particular, the Creative Industries Forum, a partnership of organisations with interests in the creative industries, has been important in generating interest in bringing forward proposals for avenues for funding of further action in the Cultural Quarter, including the proposal for a Creative Industries Area, as set out above.

## **Conclusions**

The application at the global level of policy to encourage cultural use clustering, often by means of formally-designated 'cultural quarters' now seems entrenched. However, the theoretical rationale for such policy application remains under-developed and fundamental issues concerning such mechanisms remain unresolved. The case of Wolverhampton's Cultural Quarter illuminates these issues, in particular the tension between formal and organic approaches, the potential conflict between entertainment and cultural orientations, and the potential benefits of linkage between cultural quarters and other areas. The key issue remains, however, a lack of theoretical underpinning of the whole notion of cultural clustering, and city quartering, in spite of the current discourse of evidence-based policy. While the case study cannot provide clear answers, it does indicate the need for clearer policy rationale, linkage between the mechanisms chosen and local aspirations and context, and application of sensitive city management methods integrated with cultural clustering policy. It also suggests that the widespread application of the cultural quarter mechanism may reflect a reductive and derivative approach, exacerbated by serial replication of policy 'models'. Within a contemporary



context in which authenticity, alternativeness and distinctiveness is increasingly prized, this approach may have limited value or may indeed prove to be counter-productive in the medium- or longer-term. Hence one way forward would be, as Evans (2005) suggests, for the claims of cultural clustering and associated policy to be more thoroughly tested by a pluralist approach to developing evidence and assessment. This could in turn allow the questioning of basic principles and assumptions in terms of city quartering, culture-led regeneration and cultural quarters, and could in turn lead to the development of a richer array of possible approaches, incorporating organic and top-down methods, with the potential for more sophisticated matching of needs and mechanisms.

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## **PAPER TWO**

### **THE APPLICATION OF POLICY FOR CULTURAL CLUSTERING: CURRENT PRACTICE IN SCOTLAND**

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#### **Abstract**

The arts and cultural sectors have been used by many cities in recent decades to bring about effects such as economic diversification, image enhancement, and increased social cohesion. In Scotland, such approaches have been encouraged by the Scottish Executive which has prepared a National Cultural Strategy to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from cultural development, together with guidance for local authorities in how to implement such a strategy. An important mechanism used in Scottish cities in this context is the encouragement of cultural clustering by means of 'cultural quarters', namely areas that contain a high proportion of cultural uses and are considered appropriate for further concentration of such uses. They may involve uses related to cultural production or cultural consumption, or both, and further spatial concentration is assumed to lead to synergy, agglomeration economies and minimisation of amenity loss. However, the designation of such quarters is contested. First, the notion of cultural clustering and designation of cultural quarters in principle may be questioned in terms of its contribution to urban regeneration; and second, there is contention over the optimum orientation of such quarters – for instance whether they should be oriented primarily to consumption, production or both. The cases of cultural quarters in Dundee (formally-designated) and Glasgow (informally-designated) are compared to explore these issues and to highlight conclusions for practice in the field of culture-led regeneration.

#### **1. Introduction: cultural clustering**

As a consequence of economic restructuring and deindustrialisation, promotion of cultural activities as a means of bringing about the regeneration of declining urban areas is expanding within many cities (Bianchini, 1993a; Ebert *et al*, 1994; Evans & Dawson, 1994; Kawashima, 1999). Within the UK, the Government has also directly encouraged

cultural industries. For instance, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has produced draft guidance for local authorities for the preparation of multi-dimensional Local Cultural Strategies (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999). Such approaches have also been applied by devolved administrations within the UK, and the National Cultural Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2000) highlights the contribution that culture can make to wider Scottish Executive priorities such as social justice, economic development, regeneration and equality. The Strategy also suggests that cultural development contributes to the image of Scotland as a modern and dynamic society. In particular, it indicates that Scotland's creative industries generated £5 billion and supported 100,000 jobs, and the National Cultural Strategy 2003 Annual Report (Scottish Executive, 2003) shows that this sector was anticipated to grow by nearly one-third by 2006.

The arguments for 'culture-led' approaches to urban regeneration fall into three categories. First, economic benefits involve economic diversification (Bianchini, 1993a; Williams, 1996; 1997), stimulation of innovation and creativity (Mommaas, 2004), and high quality employment (Scott, 2004); second, there may be image enhancement benefits, linked to 'place marketing' (Ashworth & Voogt, 1990; Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1995); and third, there may be increased social cohesion (Matarasso, 1997). Consequently, 'cultural quarters' have been designated in many cities where cultural use clustering is seen as providing the basis for anticipated regeneration outcomes. A 'cultural quarter' may be defined as a spatially limited and distinct area which contains a high concentration of cultural facilities compared with other areas (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000), though the specific activities within such a quarter may include ancillary activities uses such as libraries and informal recreation (Roberts, 2002). Such quarters explicitly encourage further concentration of cultural uses in terms of consumption and/or production-related uses, since this can lead to synergy, agglomeration economies and minimisation of amenity loss (Evans, 2001; Richards 2001a, 2001b; Johnson, 1996; Porter, 1990), with creative industries in particular showing a strong tendency towards spatial clustering (Pratt, 1996; Richards, 2001b; Scott, 1999, 2004; (Mommaas, 2004).

Nevertheless, there are several points of contention in respect of cultural quarters. For instance, Wansborough & Mageean (2000) suggest that key characteristics of such quarters relate in part to physically-oriented factors including their centrality within the



city, their high degree of use mixing incorporating entertainment and residential uses as well as culture-related consumption and production uses, and integration of public art with the environment (with the assumption that design frameworks can contribute significantly to cultural quarter strategies). Montgomery (2003) also emphasizes the physical characteristics of potential cultural quarters, together with other aspects such as contribution to local identity. However, others such as Mommaas (2004) and Scott (2004) emphasise a more generalised or non-spatial economic set of assumptions in relation to cultural clustering. Moreover, some authors suggest that such quarters should seek to ensure a 'cross-over' between production and consumption (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000; Williams 1997; Montgomery, 2003) while others point to the wide variety of choice available along the spectrum of encouraging consumption or production (Newman and Smith, 2000). Indeed, Mommaas (2004) identifies five different sets of justifications relating to cultural quarters in the Netherlands, and suggests that some of these are potentially oppositional or contradictory.

Furthermore, cultural quarters may be seen to lead to escalation of property and land values and consequent displacement of those without a stake in such values, and there are parallel arguments for dispersal of cultural facilities and uses (Evans, 2001). In addition, while cultural quarters have emerged in smaller cities and towns throughout the UK, it may be argued that synergies are only feasible within the context of large cities (Scott, 2004). There is also contention over the desirability of either formal designation of cultural quarters within statutory spatial planning documents, or informal designation in other policy documents or implementation plans; for instance Zukin (1995) and Kunzmann (2004) suggest that formal designation may be self-defeating in terms of achieving regeneration outcomes.

This article examines the application of notions of cultural clustering in two cities in Scotland, namely Glasgow and Dundee, which apply very different approaches. It is based upon research conducted by the author by means of documentary review and structured interviews with key actors in each context, including spatial planners and cultural administrators. The research aimed to address the question of why different approaches to cultural clustering were applied in different cities – essentially, was this a consequence of the need to allow sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of the local context, or was it the result of fundamentally different interpretations of the benefits of

cultural clustering? In the light of the contention surrounding the principles and practices of cultural clustering outlined above, as well as the ubiquity of initiatives in this field, it is important to ascertain how such contention impacts on actual cases, and how assumptions are derived. The answers to such questions are of clear relevance to improving practice in this field, which requires a more critical interrogation of the potential benefits of culture-led regeneration approaches, including the application of 'cultural quarters' (Evans, 2005). This article uses the cases of Glasgow and Dundee to explore these issues. It is structured as follows: first, the cases of Glasgow and Dundee are set out in terms of the way policy was derived and linked to contextual factors; second, an analysis is made of the reasons for the differences of approach in these cases; and third, broad conclusions are proposed of relevance to the application of cultural clustering in other contexts.

## **2. The case of Glasgow**

Glasgow City is an area of 578,000 people within a broader city-region on the west coast of Scotland. It has a long-established cultural sector, and in 1990 it was selected as European City of Culture, which led to a year-long programme involving eight million attendances at cultural events (DTZ Piedad Consulting, 2003). This was followed by the Year of Visual Arts in 1996 and the designation of UK City of Art and Design in 1999. The creative industries have been identified as a key growth area for the city, and the City Council supports the visual arts sector in particular by means of direct provision as well as funding external organisations and individuals. There were 32,084 people in the city employed in this sector in 2001, approximately 8% of the total workforce (DTZ Piedad Consulting, 2003).

The first clear proposal for the creation of some form of (formal or informal) cultural quarter would seem to have come from a Glasgow Development Agency Management Paper in 1996 entitled 'Regenerating the Merchant City: Glasgow's Cultural Quarter', which proposed that the Merchant City area should become the new cultural quarter for the city, in order to attract small and medium sized enterprises in the media and creative industries, and to act as a focal point for tourists and visitors (DTZ Piedad Consulting, 2003). In addition, a study by Urban Cultures (1994) recommended the development of the Merchant City as a cultural quarter. This study indicated that the area was home to over 20 independent arts organisations. It recommended a strategy for culturally-led

urban renewal to the area, and listed 20 actions to achieve a vibrant cultural quarter, including financial incentives, encouragement of mixed uses, promotion of high quality urban design, and direct development projects such as new build and compulsory purchase.

Part One of the City Plan (Glasgow City Council, 2001) shows that the City Centre is anticipated as the main location for new strategic arts, culture, media and leisure infrastructure. While no discrete 'culture quarter' is identified, Part Two of the City Plan describes six geographical clusters of arts, culture or media activities. While this clustering is seen as largely a result of chance, policy supports the retention of the facilities within them, and the encouragement of new uses that relate to existing cultural activities and reinforce the creative industries. Perhaps the most significant cultural node is the Merchant City area, where the Tron and Ramshorn Theatres are already established, the City Halls is to be refurbished as a National Music Centre, and there are several small scale arts businesses. This area also provides a higher than city average level of tourism employment and creative industry employment (both sectors providing 10% of employees compared with a city average of 7% employed in tourism and 8% employed in creative industries).

An important part of the rationale for an 'informal' approach to cultural quarter designation in this case was the perception by some officers that formal designation could devalue other cultural nodes within the city by providing a 'honeypot'. This, it was supposed, could not only lead visitors away from other cultural attractions, spread throughout the city centre and beyond, but could also detract from the overall perception of the city's cultural assets by implying that all important cultural attractions were located within the quarter. This risk was felt by officers to be exacerbated by the complexity of the pattern of cultural assets in the city, and their geographical spread, which meant that 'labelling' of any one area would be at best ineffectual or at worst harmful to the overall pattern (personal interview).

In addition, a cultural policy officer suggested that formal designation of the area as a 'cultural quarter' would be contrary to the desire of local artists who wished to maintain a degree of informality of use which they saw as incompatible with such a designation. Such a desire springs in part from the fear of potential gentrification and inflation of land and property values; while the City Council maintains ownership of key managed

workspaces within the area, there can be no guarantee that this will continue in perpetuity, and of course residential values and rents would anyhow be assumed to rise as a result of designation. Moreover, local artists displayed a more general antipathy to cultural commodification, branding and 're-imaging', with associated concerns that designation could lead to homogenisation with loss of the area's distinctiveness (personal interview). The orientation of spatial planning in Glasgow would also seem to have played a part in the choice of an 'informal' designation for the cultural quarter, since the explicitly-physical approach of Glasgow's city plan, with limited policy content in terms of arts and culture other than in relation to provision for public art and public lighting, would seem to have militated against consideration of cultural use clustering which would involve broader policy consideration in terms of arts and culture, leisure, and economic development.

In terms of implementation mechanisms, the Merchant City Townscape Heritage Initiative comprises a partnership involving the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Glasgow City Council (GCC), and Scottish Enterprise Glasgow (SEG). Both GCC and SEG committed annual funding for the Initiative for 2000-2005, and the HLF committed to match this investment. Approvals of individual grants are made by the THI Executive Group comprising members of SEG and GCC with Historic Scotland acting as advisors. The aim of the THI is to regenerate the built environment, and grants are available for high quality repair, restoration and refurbishment of buildings and public realm. As part of the City Council's commitment to the Townscape Heritage Initiative, the City developed a five year action plan (Glasgow City Council, 2002a). The Plan acknowledges that the Merchant City area offers a range of opportunities for cultural industries, and it commits the Council, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise Glasgow, to implement business support mechanisms and incentives to encourage new business start-ups, particularly in the design and media industries. In addition, Scottish Enterprise Glasgow has sought to enhance the potential for additional employment in the cultural and creative industries in the Merchant City area for instance by developing managed incubator space for arts-based activity and identifying other forms of support needed. This is because SEG has indicated that there is evidence of market failure in the area of property provision for creative and cultural industries and specifically arts businesses.

Furthermore, in 2002 Glasgow City Council adopted a Strategy for Housing the Visual Arts in Glasgow (Glasgow City Council, 2002b) by means of a joint approach between the Departments of Cultural and Leisure Services and Development and Regeneration Services. This Strategy involves the development of two major council-owned buildings in the Merchant City, the Grade 'B' listed North Block of King Street and the Grade 'A' listed Briggait. Together, these buildings will house 11 visual arts organisations. The buildings will provide a range of open access production, studio, exhibition and educational facilities. The aims of the Strategy are to provide high quality facilities for artists; to raise the profile of the visual arts; and to ensure greater access to the visual arts. The strategy has cross-departmental support, and the development of the two buildings was identified as a key action in the City Council's Best Value Review of the Visual Arts. In addition, the Strategy acknowledges the 'cluster effect of a successful arts quarter' (Glasgow City Council, 2002b; p. 1). This Strategy also accords with both the City Council and Scottish Enterprise's ambitions for the area as a concentration of arts uses, if not a designated 'cultural quarter'.

### **3. The case of Dundee**

Dundee is a city of 145,000 people on the east coast of Scotland, in which industrial and corporate restructuring has resulted in the extreme contraction of traditional industrial sectors. Hence attempts have been made to encourage retention of the population as well as to enhance the image of the city so as to attract visitors and inward investment. Unlike Glasgow, the city has designated a formal Cultural Quarter. This area was selected since it surrounds the flagship cultural venues of the Dundee Repertory Theatre and the Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) Centre (a cinema and arts complex with a restaurant and bar). While the concept of a cultural quarter dates back to the 1980s, the trigger for the designation of the Quarter was the development of DCA, which prompted the City Council to commission a feasibility study into a possible cultural quarter. Image enhancement was an important principle from the start, and it was felt that the creation of a critical mass of cultural activity – including both production- and consumption-related activity – would be easier to achieve and would generate a greater impact than dispersal of such activity.

EDAW and Urban Cultures were commissioned to produce recommendations in relation to a possible cultural quarter, and this culminated in their report of September

2000 (EDAW and Urban Cultures, 2000). This defined the area of the cultural quarter, which it suggested had a well-defined core, a cohesive character, was easy to walk through and had a high catchment potential. Essentially, their concept of a cultural quarter comprises a 'hub and spokes' model whereby the core is linked to other facilities immediately outside the area, and it suggests that the area could eventually be extended to the area to Westport/Blackness to the north, cut off from the main cultural axis by a major road. The report shows that Dundee had a particular strength in digital media businesses since there were 146 such businesses in the city, of which 104 could be classified as cultural businesses, including marketing, advertising and graphic design; recording services; broadcasting and cable services; and computer games businesses. The computer games industry is singled out for particular emphasis since companies such as Rage Games and Vis-Interactive had chosen to locate in Dundee specifically because of the expertise located within the University of Abertay (EDAW and Urban Cultures, 2000).

The report suggests that by 2010 the area could incorporate a strong critical mass of cultural economic production, a centre for creativity and knowledge, and be a desirable area to live – brought about by mixed uses and a more vital urban environment. To achieve these outcomes, the report advocates assistance of business growth by more targeted start-up assistance; more marketing for inward investment to build on the success of computer games companies; and the development of new workspace such as high specification business space for digital media companies, but including integrated business / management support. It also suggests the introduction of new facilities including a medium-sized music venue and a new gallery/exhibition and photographic gallery; more private galleries, cafes, bars and restaurants; more rehearsal space; the promotion of cultural festivals and events; and the addition of new city centre residential accommodation.

The current local plan (Dundee City Council, 2003) designates the Cultural Quarter and indicates that uses that further its role as a focus for 'cultural and related leisure and business activities' (Dundee City Council, 2003, 15) will be encouraged. Specifically, it states that proposals to extend speciality retailing or other small independent uses will be encouraged, and proposals will be judged 'in terms of their contribution to the mix and diversity of uses and to their potential to enhance its visitor attraction' (Dundee City Council, 2003; p. 15). A council officer indicated that the rationale for the formal

designation of a cultural quarter in Dundee was linked to the need to contribute to the 're-imaging' of the city (personal interview), and designation follows the advocacy set out in the report by EDAW and Urban Cultures (2000). The factor of scale would also seem to have been critical, since the city does not have the same geographical spread of facilities as Glasgow, with little apparent risk of negative effects on other facilities outside the quarter. Moreover, the presence in Dundee of key City Council officers who were personally committed to the concept of cultural regeneration was important in this context, since they were able to act as 'project champions'. The influence of perceived good practice in other contexts was also evident in Dundee, with one City Council officer indicating the importance of examples elsewhere – particularly the case of Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter – for Dundee's approach to designation (personal interview).

In terms of implementation mechanisms, the Dundee Partnership, an umbrella organisation representing all major stakeholders in the city and co-ordinated by the City Council, is in overall control of the Cultural Quarter's promotion and development. Partly because of the limited time that has elapsed since designation, direct outcomes of the Cultural Quarter by 2005 were small in scale, comprising environmental improvements, plans for further development, and some additional facility provision (personal interview). Nevertheless, there remain major opportunities for culture-related development, including the 'Burns and Harris' building, a redundant printing works acquired by the City Council and anticipated for mixed uses with a cultural element. Environmental improvements and public art have also been achieved in the Cultural Quarter, as in other parts of the city, and the Façade Enhancement Grants Scheme has proved extremely successful, with 80 cases of take-up in the city. In addition, adjacent to the Cultural Quarter, a Digital Media Park has been planned, and there are indications that the choice of Dundee as a location by digital media firms is linked in part to the progress made in changing the city's image – particularly in connection with the establishment of the Cultural Quarter (personal interview). While no new significant residential facilities have been established in the area since the designation of the Cultural Quarter, the nearby City Quay area of the waterfront is being developed as a major new residential location.

#### 4. Analysis

The cases set out above illuminate the main areas of contention concerning the application of policy for cultural use clustering, in terms of the rationale for policy and the way it is applied. Clearly, the approaches to cultural clustering of Glasgow and Dundee are clearly very different in orientation. Most noticeably, Glasgow City Council has adopted an informal policy approach that does not specify a designated area as a ‘cultural quarter’ for the city as a whole. Dundee City Council, by contrast, has an adopted city plan that sets out one designated Cultural Quarter, to act as a focus for further cultural clustering for the benefit of the wider city. Moreover, the approach of Glasgow to the nearest equivalent to a ‘cultural quarter’ – namely the Merchant City – has a clear orientation and emphasis towards cultural production, particularly in terms of the visual arts, currently the area’s current cultural strength, while Dundee’s Cultural Quarter is explicitly oriented towards both consumption and production uses. These evident contrasts lead to the question of whether they derive from differences in context and aspiration, or from differences in the interpretation of the potential of cultural clustering.

In terms of differences concerning cultural quarter designation in principle, the contextual issue of scale is of particular relevance. As a major UK city, Glasgow has a plethora of cultural consumption attractions, which has been strengthened by the city’s success in recent years in attracting international attention within the cultural arena. Moreover, such attractions are not concentrated in one part of the city, but occur (with different emphases) in several areas – as acknowledged in Part Two of the City Plan (Glasgow City Council, 2001). This rich and complex pattern of cultural uses did not seem to be compatible with designation of one area, since this involved the risk of devaluing the overall cultural attraction of the city. This factor also applies to cities such as Manchester in England, which has a history of cultural regeneration and a significant but dispersed array of cultural attractions and nodes. By contrast, in Dundee the relatively small number of cultural attractions, and their concentration in one area, made the identification of a unified cultural cluster much less problematic, and the ‘hub and spokes’ model allowed the encouragement of links to other cultural attractions in the city (personal interview). The orientation to spatial planning was another aspect of context affecting policy application, with the case of Glasgow illustrating an explicitly-physical approach that did not facilitate cultural quarter designation (personal



interview). In relation to other contextual factors, in Dundee the priority for image enhancement and promotion, combined with the opportunity arising from the proximity of the key cultural flagship developments of the Repertory Theatre and the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre, would also seem to have contributed to the decision to formally designate the Quarter, as did the factor of agency in terms of the presence of 'project champions' with an enthusiasm and commitment to culture-led regeneration (personal interview).

In terms of the consumption versus production orientation, the area chosen in Glasgow as an 'informal' cultural cluster had a clear production emphasis, particularly in terms of the visual arts. The decision to concentrate on this aspect would seem to flow directly from the context, in terms of developing an existing strength. Again, the plethora of consumption-related cultural attractions elsewhere in Glasgow would also seem to have contributed in the decision not to encourage such uses in the Merchant City area (personal interview). In Dundee, the lack of clear productive capacity in the creative industries (other than the digital media sector and other sectors linked to the local Universities), and the need to encourage visitors to the city (in conjunction with a high-profile strategy of city marketing), meant that a more broadly-based strategy seemed appropriate. The adoption of such a strategy also followed the recommendations of the feasibility study for the area (personal interview).

The approach to cultural clustering within Glasgow and Dundee, both in terms of cultural quarter designation in principle, and in terms of orientation towards production or consumption, would therefore seem to arise in part from the specific circumstances within each context. However, the differences in approach in these cases may also be linked to unresolved issues in terms of assumptions in relation to designation of cultural quarters in principle, as well as what is considered 'good practice' in the orientation of cultural quarters. In terms of designation, the approaches of Glasgow and Dundee would seem to have been influenced not only by context, particularly the extent of pre-existing richness and diversity of cultural uses, as well as differing priorities for regeneration, planning 'styles' and officer commitment, but also by different interpretations of the merits or otherwise *in principle* of cultural quarter designation. In other words, local authority officers in each city also appear to hold different sets of conceptual frameworks in relation to cultural clustering. Broadly, in Glasgow, such clustering was seen as having developed previously in a piecemeal fashion, and there

was seen by planning officers to be a need for an incremental approach to future culture-related development, involving a 'light touch' to allow diversity and innovation as well as a degree of 'creative chaos', which was seen as incompatible with cultural quarter designation by means of spatial planning policy (personal interview). In Dundee, by contrast, officers clearly articulated the assumption of the need to proactively promote and encourage further cultural use clustering on a formal cultural quarter model, based upon the assumption of the potential of transfer of aspects of policy derived from other sources and models, particularly that of Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter (personal interview). Such differences serve to highlight the contestation surrounding cultural clustering in principle that is evident in the literature. Moreover, such contestation is also evident within each city; for instance, in Glasgow, where formal designation was not applied, it was nevertheless acknowledged that such designation could assist in cases of conflict between competing uses (personal interview); similarly, in Dundee, while the Cultural Quarter is formally designated in the Local Plan, concerns were expressed of possible negative effects by the administrators of some cultural attractions outside the Quarter, and, partly as a consequence, the boundaries of the Quarter are deliberately vague (personal interview).

In terms of orientation towards production or consumption, while there were contributory reasons for the differing orientations of Glasgow and Dundee in terms of context, these differences would also seem to be linked to different interpretations of the defining characteristics or necessary conditions for cultural quarters. Again, therefore, this indicates that local authority officers in these cities appear to hold different conceptual frameworks and assumptions in relation to cultural clustering, particularly in terms of the issue of the necessity of 'cross-over' between consumption and production uses within cultural quarters. In the Glasgow case, the assumption is that a cultural quarter can function effectively within a production-based approach, whereas in the Dundee case, the synergies brought about by the inclusion of elements of consumption uses are seen as essential (personal interview). As indicated above, the latter approach is supported in much of the literature (for instance Wansborough and Mageean, 2000; Montgomery, 2003), and, even in the case of Glasgow, DTZ Pleda Consulting (2003) proposed that the Merchant City area provide a destination focus for tourists as well as a focus for the cultural and creative industries. Thus the differences in policy orientation between the cases of cultural quarters in Glasgow and Dundee would seem to be only in

part the result of differences of context, with different assumptions in relation to good practice for cultural clustering also being evident.

The points of contention highlighted in the cases above would seem to be paralleled by examples elsewhere in the UK. For instance, in England, the case of Manchester is similar to that of Glasgow, and Manchester's Northern Quarter is not formally designated but is an informal production-based cultural quarter. By contrast, the case of Sheffield illustrates a formally-designated quarter with a production orientation (a 'cultural industries quarter'), and others such as Wolverhampton illustrate a production and consumption orientation again with a formal designation. As in the cases within Scotland, these differences are not fully explained by differences of aspiration and context, since they also reflect different theoretical assumptions in relation to the principles and practice of cultural clustering (McCarthy, 2004).

While there are major differences in approach within such cases, many of the points of contention concerning cultural quarters seem nevertheless to be related to the generic approach often implied by the application of this mechanism. This is in turn related to the common process of serial replication by which such policy applications may be transferred; essentially, exemplars of good practice would often seem to be applied to other contexts without the context sensitivity or critical approach to assumptions required to allow regeneration aims to be achieved. This process may be exacerbated by the involvement of a small number of globally-active consultants or cultural mediators who are active in this area (Evans, 2005). Hence local authorities that outsource feasibility studies in this field, as many of those that have developed cultural quarters have done, are likely to receive recommendations from actors that have operated in many other contexts. While this may be seen to allow dissemination of good practice, it may equally lead to the replication of solutions involving essentially the same mix of elements, albeit tailored to some extent to local context. This may lead in turn to homogenisation which may prove counter-productive in terms of aims of maximising and enhancing distinctiveness (McCarthy, 2006).

Thus one way forward in terms of improving potential policy effectiveness concerning cultural quarters would be for a greater appreciation of the spectrum of possibilities that is available for linkage of culture and regeneration, as opposed to the broadly generic and often rather reductive principles implied by the term 'cultural quarters'. The

breadth of possible approaches in this context is highlighted by Evans (2005), who distinguishes for instance between culture-led regeneration and cultural regeneration. Moreover, several authors present typologies of cultural clustering that point to the possibility of a more sophisticated match between local needs and context, and policy mechanisms (Evans, 2004; Scott, 2004).

However, all such approaches imply the need for policy intervention, for instance by formal spatial planning approaches or informal policy mechanisms. But this leaves a fundamental issue unresolved, namely the basic contention that the application of policy for local cultural clustering is inimical to the achievement of many objectives for culture-led regeneration. Hence for instance Kunzmann (2004) asserts that ‘One thing planners should resist is zoning for culture and creativity. This would be counter-productive’ (p. 399), and Griffiths (2005) suggests that formal policy designation for cultural clustering may reflect a technocratic approach unsuitable in many contexts, with the implication of the need to widen the range of possibilities still further to include bottom-up or organic methods. This is echoed by Shorthose (2004), who contends that the Lace Market in Nottingham developed as a *de facto* cultural quarter by gradual organic growth rather than top-down policy application, and Garcia (2004), who shows that such an ‘organic’ approach was preferred to more formal policy by creative entrepreneurs in Glasgow. Hence consideration of a fuller range of possibilities for encouraging culture-led regeneration, including formal, informal and organic approaches, would seem to offer a means of contributing to more effective achievement of regeneration outcomes in widely-varying contexts.

## **5. Conclusions**

While it is clear that culture-led approaches to regeneration can deliver outcomes for both designated areas and wider cities, it is equally clear that the underlying conceptual frameworks are under-developed, with persistent areas of contention over both basic principles and good practice in relation to cultural clustering. This is illustrated in Scotland by the differences in approach between the cases of cultural quarters in Glasgow and Dundee. Such differences are only in part grounded in differences of context and aspiration, with parallel differences also evident in the basic conceptual assumptions concerning principles of, and good practice in, the application of ‘cultural quarters’ as a policy mechanism. There is therefore a need for more coherent

conceptual frameworks for cultural clustering as well as more grounded notions of good practice. One way forward would be for the extension of frameworks to incorporate a wider spectrum of possible approaches, involving organic as well as top-down methods, which could help to replace generic notions based in part upon policy transfer and serial replication. This could help to address the reductive nature of much contemporary practice with respect to cultural quarters, a compelling issue in view of the ubiquity of this mechanism and its location within the orthodoxy of contemporary urban regeneration.

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# **PAPER THREE**

## **PROMOTING IMAGE AND IDENTITY IN ‘CULTURAL QUARTERS’: THE CASE OF DUNDEE**

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### **Abstract**

Many cities in recent decades have encouraged the arts and cultural sectors as a means of achieving regeneration outcomes. Such strategies have been followed particularly in cities with perceived problems in relation to image and identity, linked to the need to promote inward investment and tourism. One policy implication has been the designation of ‘cultural quarters’, as areas where a ‘critical mass’ of culture-related activity is seen as providing the basis for further related uses. Dundee’s Cultural Quarter follows this model, but evidence so far raises questions as to the extent to which relevant policy is embedded within local identity, history and culture. This implies that such quarters may promote homogeneity rather than distinctiveness, and may therefore prove to be counter-productive.

### **Introduction**

The rationale for ‘culture-led’ approaches to urban regeneration involves three closely linked strands of argument in terms of the assumption of perceived benefits. First, such approaches are seen to lead to economic diversification and employment creation (Booth and Boyle, 1993; Bianchini, 1993; Williams, 1996), with an increasing convergence between cultural and economic discourses (Garcia, 2004). Second, it is assumed that such strategies can contribute to ‘place marketing’ or place positioning through image enhancement or ‘re-imaging’ (Ashworth and Voogt, 1990; Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1995), and it is precisely those cities that are judged as having a relatively negative image – perhaps even ‘pariah’ status – that have adopted such strategies with most enthusiasm (Fitzsimons, 1995; McCarthy, 1998; 1999). Third, it is argued that increased participation in the arts and cultural activity can lead to increased social cohesion (Matarasso, 1997), and this can lead to a general increase in the quality

of life for city residents and workers, including more sustainable development and a reduction in crime (Comedia, 1991; Ebert, Gnad and Kunzmann, 1994; Darlow, 1996).

Partly because of these perceived benefits, 'cultural quarters' have been designated in many cities, as areas where such a 'critical mass' of culture-related activity is seen as providing the basis for anticipated sustainable regeneration outcomes. Clustering in this context is assumed to lead to synergy, agglomeration economies and minimisation of amenity loss (Evans, 2001, Richards 2001b). Such cultural quarters may concentrate on consumption-related uses, so that complementary uses may be developed, and an increase in the range and variety of such uses may attract further visitors (Johnson, 1996). Alternatively, cultural quarters may prioritise production-related uses, so that proximity of producers allows the enhancement of competitive advantage through exchange and the development of networks incorporating overlapping skills and competencies, with clustering reducing transaction costs (Porter, 1990).

However, it may be suggested that concepts of culture-led regeneration, and specific policy mechanisms such as cultural quarters, are inherently flawed. In particular, all types of cultural quarters appear to lack a theoretical basis and to conflate aims and rationales and defining characteristics. In the case of the latter, some authors for instance suggest that such quarters should seek to ensure a 'cross-over' between production and consumption (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000; Williams 1997; Montgomery, 2003) while others point to the wide variety of choice available along the spectrum of encouraging consumption or production (Newman and Smith, 2000). Furthermore, some authors encourage the notion of consumption uses in such quarters (Williams, 1996; 1997) while others prioritise production uses (Crewe, 1996). In addition, some aspects of cultural quarters appear to be potentially contradictory. For instance, there may be a conflict between encouraging cultural and artistic production that is of appeal only to a limited audience, and encouraging more broadly-appealing and potentially inclusive modes of cultural and artistic production. There may also be a conflict between encouraging freedom and creativity at the same time as a standard set of physical conditions or components.

As well as such conceptual problems, there are practical problems associated with the tendency towards erosion of identity and loss of authenticity, with a decreased propensity for 'distinctiveness of place' that may accompany cultural quarter

designation. This is part of a broader issue in relation to the commodification of heritage and the development of symbolic space as part of a specified cultural consumption pattern (Richards, 2001). Thus, in the context of cultural quarters, the local state may conspire in the cultural construction of environments that are distanced from the local historical and social milieu, involving uses that are not culturally embedded in the locality, with few linkages to local ideas of identity and local lifestyles. This may arise because the priorities of image enhancement override other objectives (Pollard, 2004, Zukin, 1982, 1995), with the result of the imposition of pre-conceived 'flagship' or iconic cultural developments that are not grounded in the local cultural milieu. The benefits arising from such projects may be exclusive since they may alienate those who lack access, either real or perceived, to new facilities (Landry *et al*, 1996; Greffe and McDonnell-Lenoach, 1995), and they may result in gentrification by means of displacement of lower-value uses which may have provided the initial rationale for improvement (Harvey, 1989; Evans and Dawson, 1994; Mommaas, 2004). Ultimately, the homogenisation that these processes imply may prove counter-productive in the longer-term, since it may erode the very comparative advantage that it seeks to enhance (Richards 2001).

This article seeks to discover how far present policy application in relation to 'cultural quarters' is leading to such homogenisation, and its associated effects, by examining the case of the Cultural Quarter designated in Dundee. It is structured as follows: first, the origins and development of the Quarter are explored; second, the nature of resulting policy is considered; third, the implementation mechanisms and their effects are highlighted; fourth, these factors are analysed in terms of how far the process appears to have contributed to greater homogenisation; and finally, wider conclusions are proposed with implications for 'cultural quarters' in other contexts.

### **Dundee's 'Cultural Quarter'**

Dundee is a city in which industrial and corporate restructuring has resulted in the extreme contraction of traditional industrial sectors. Hence by the 1980s, large areas of the city had become physically redundant, and unemployment in the city was continuing to increase. These factors exacerbated a broader trend of out-migration from the city, with some observers suggesting that the city was becoming a 'pariah city' because of self-sustaining decline across a range of factors, linked to a negative city image. Hence

attempts were made to encourage retention of the population as well as to enhance the image of the city so as to attract visitors and inward investment. As in many other cities, arts and cultural activities continue to be a focus of interest in terms of regeneration strategies, in part a result of the concentration of high-profile institutions such as the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and the Repertory Theatre. This culminated in the formal designation of a 'cultural quarter', considered in more detail below.

### *Origins*

In the late 1980s, the City Centre Initiative for Dundee emphasised the need to enhance cultural activity in the city centre, with a key objective being the development of a new arts centre. This was subsequently achieved by the development of the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre (a cinema and arts complex with a restaurant and theatre), and this in turn prompted the City Council to commission a feasibility study for a formally-designated cultural quarter. A key element of the rationale for a cultural quarter at this stage was the need to establish the credibility of the city within the cultural arena, in the context of a history within which the city of Dundee was seen as dull, declining and dominated by a residual culture of poverty, social exclusion and welfare dependence. Thus image enhancement was seen as paramount. This was underlined also by the City's 1997 Arts Action Plan (Dundee City Council, 1997), which also highlighted the need for a new flagship contemporary arts centre. In addition, it was felt that the creation of a critical mass of cultural activity – including both production- and consumption-related activity – would be easier to achieve and would generate a greater impact than the dispersal of such activities.

EDAW and Urban Cultures were commissioned to produce recommendations for a cultural quarter, and this led to their report of September 2000 (EDAW and Urban Cultures, 2000). This defines the area of the proposed cultural quarter, which was proposed as focusing on the existing flagship cultural venues of the Dundee Repertory Theatre and the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre. This area, the report suggests, contained a well-defined core, a cohesive character, was easy to walk through and had a high catchment potential, though it suggests that the quarter could be extended to the north, across a major road, possibly for companies that did not need a 'high-profile' location. The report highlights the strengths of the city in terms of cultural uses as part

of a rationale for the development of a new ‘cultural quarter’, and it specifically identifies the city’s strengths in the digital media sector; indeed, the computer games industry is singled out for particular emphasis since companies such as Rage Games and Vis-Interactive had chosen to locate in Dundee specifically because of the expertise located within the University of Abertay (EDAW and Urban Cultures, 2000). The report also applies a long-term vision for the cultural quarter within which it would expand as a centre for the creative industries as well as a desirable area to live.

Early consultation was undertaken on the idea of the cultural quarter, and there was some opposition to designation from some major cultural uses outside the proposed quarter who felt that designation would detract from their viability. However, this would seem to have been taken into account in the quarter’s ‘hub and spokes’ concept, whereby links are proposed between the quarter and surrounding attractions. There were also some concerns from local residents concerning potential nuisance because, while most licensed premises in the proposed area were relatively small and did not cater for large groups of young people, there was evidence of development pressure for large ‘theme pubs’, and it was feared that such developments might be tempted to locate within a designated cultural quarter. Nevertheless, businesses within the proposed cultural quarter were overwhelmingly supportive of designation; this absence of controversy concerning designation and operation of the cultural quarter could be seen to derive in part from the dominance of small independent outlets, including retail and licensed premises. Such businesses would seem to see any increase in footfall – likely to result from increased cultural uses – as likely to benefit them.

### *Policies*

The current Local Plan (Dundee City Council, 2003) designates the ‘Cultural Quarter’ and indicates that uses that further its role as a focus for ‘cultural and related leisure and business activities’ (Dundee City Council, 2003, 15) will be encouraged. Specifically, it states that proposals to extend speciality retailing or other small independent uses will be encouraged, and proposals will be judged ‘in terms of their contribution to the mix and diversity of uses and to their potential to enhance its visitor attraction’ (Dundee City Council, 2003, 15). Significantly, in terms of components within the Quarter, the City Council acknowledged the need to ensure indigenous development of cultural uses and attractions rather than ‘transferring’ models from outside. For instance, an early

proposal for a street theatre based on a model imported from outside was rejected, and a conscious decision was made to build on local capacity and strengths, for instance in the digital media sector (personal interview).

There are also key links to wider policy. In particular, the City Council's Corporate Plan (Dundee City Council, 2003) aims to promote key sectoral initiatives including the creative industries, and the Economic Development Plan (Dundee City Council, 2001) also prioritises this sector, since it is assumed that there is considerable potential for expansion, linked to the research being carried out in new technology areas such as digital media. Indeed, development of the Cultural Quarter is a key strategic goal of the Plan. In addition the broader context is relevant since Dundee was the first local authority in Scotland to adopt a local cultural strategy following the publication of the National Cultural Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2000). There was widespread consultation as part of Dundee's Cultural Strategy development, and the Strategy relates cultural planning to its corporate objectives and identifies the contribution cultural activities make to broader economic and social well-being. The development of the Cultural Quarter is seen as key to the Strategy, together with broader aspects such as growth of the cultural industries sector.

### *Implementation Mechanisms*

In terms of overall management, the Creative Industries and Cultural Quarter Steering Group emerged at an early stage, prior to formal designation of the Cultural Quarter, as a key mechanism to promote cultural industries. This Group comprised a broad range of partners including Scottish Enterprise Tayside (the Local Enterprise Company), the University of Dundee, and relevant council departments. It reported directly to the Dundee Partnership, an umbrella organisation of all relevant stakeholders in the city, which acts as a focus for debate on all aspects of service delivery. This management mechanism ensured support for the concept of the Quarter on the part of all of the city's major stakeholders, as well as linkages to other aspects of corporate policy. However, the Group did not have dedicated staff, and it was no longer functional in 2004.

Nevertheless, this Group encouraged the formation of the Cultural Quarter Development Company, a public/private development company. This Company has a

broad range of partners, including the city council, Scottish Enterprise Tayside and the private sector, and it has the ability to intervene quickly in the market to acquire suitable properties on an opportunistic basis in order to further the aims of the Quarter. It had banked assets of £25,000 and was still in existence in 2004, with the potential to take a management role in terms of further culture-related space such as art galleries, craft workshops and speciality retailing within the Quarter. However, this Company has no dedicated staff, and the Dundee Partnership remains in overall control of the Cultural Quarter's promotion and development. This was justified by a senior Council officer (personal interview) by the need for a 'lighter touch' than that applied in cases such as Dublin's Temple Bar area, in view of the limited scale of Dundee and the need to allow an organic approach to the development of the Quarter.

In order to further the aims for new culture-related uses in the Quarter, a development brief was prepared by the City Council for the redundant Tayside Printing Works, the main opportunity site in the Quarter, which was acquired by the City Council prior to designation of the Quarter. This site comprises 0.195 hectares with a range of buildings totalling 1,900 square metres. The brief followed the suggestions of the original report of EDAW and Urban Cultures (2000) for the site, by recommending a range of mixed uses including cultural businesses, speciality retailing, bars and restaurants, residential uses, and a cultural (music) venue.

The need for the Quarter to contribute to image enhancement was shown by the City Council's action in promoting the area, after designation of the Quarter, by means of two promotional events for businesses. Two promotional leaflets were also prepared, one for general use and one for developers interested in opportunity sites available in the Quarter. Further branding mechanisms for the Cultural Quarter were recommended by EDAW and Urban Cultures' (2000) report, including the design of a brand logo and the use of opportunities for increased public art. However, following consultation, operators of the major cultural venues in the Quarter suggested the need for the development of a clearer 'critical mass' of cultural activity within the Quarter before high profile marketing activity was undertaken. They also indicated that generic marketing at such an early stage was not as appropriate as targeted marketing of the existing 'flagship' cultural institutions such as the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre and the Repertory Theatre.



## *Outcomes*

By 2004, the direct outcomes of designation of the Cultural Quarter by 2004 were small in scale, though of course little time had elapsed to allow achievements to emerge. The identifiable outcomes mainly comprised public art and environmental improvements, including improvement to shop frontages resulting from the targeted application of the City Council's Façade Enhancement Grants Scheme, which allowed for 50% payment towards the cost of façade improvements. In addition, however, it may be inferred that the location in the Quarter of new facilities such as restaurants has been encouraged by Cultural Quarter. There also remain major opportunities for further cultural development, for instance in relation to the Tayside Printing Works site. While no concrete achievements had been made in relation to this site by November 2004, negotiations were in progress with a developer to bring about the required outcomes.

There would also seem to have been effects outside the Quarter. For instance, on the 'railyards' site, adjacent to the Cultural Quarter, a Digital Media Park has been planned as a result of the emerging capacity in this sector, linked to teaching at the Universities of Abertay and Dundee. The city continues to demonstrate a 'hot spot' in the digital media sector, and the choice of Dundee as a location by digital media firms would seem to be linked in part to the progress made in changing the city's image, itself affected by the Cultural Quarter initiative. This may be in part a consequence of the profile of digital media entrepreneurs (young and male) and their propensity to value urban vibrancy and vitality, as well as the cachet associated with a designated cultural quarter. A master plan for the development of the Digital Media Park, on ex-railway lands, had been agreed and granted outline planning permission by 2004, and it is anticipated that the Park will provide up to 300,000 square feet of new-build office and specialist serviced accommodation over a ten-year period, including flexible provision of a range of 'business incubators', allowing start-up space for digital media and associated businesses.

While no significant new proposals for residential uses have emerged in the Quarter itself, the 'City Quay' area of the waterfront is being developed as a major new residential location. This area has experienced high demand for residential properties, with consequent (relative) high selling prices, driven in part by investor interest. It may be inferred that the attractiveness of this area has been enhanced in part by the

proximity of the Cultural Quarter, given the profile of the residents – mainly young and transitory, and thereby likely to particularly value cultural venues and the proximity of uses such as bars and restaurants. In addition there were indications in 2004 of the possibility of the development of part of the Blackness area – immediately outside the Cultural Quarter – for mixed-use leisure-oriented uses that could provide an impetus for further culture-related uses.

## **Analysis**

The case of Dundee's Cultural Quarter highlights two interlinked issues relating to the local cultural embedding of Cultural Quarters and related processes of homogenisation, namely, first, the serial replication of policy frames, mechanisms and content in relation to cultural quarters; and second, the prioritisation of image enhancement as the key defining approach or strategy within many such quarters.

In relation to the issue of serial replication, an important factor relates to the process by which policy approaches, concepts and applications are transferred between contexts. Essentially, in the case of Dundee, as in many other UK cities, the original notion of a 'cultural quarter' would seem to have been derived from experiences and applications elsewhere, with the experience of Sheffield providing a potential model for cultural clustering in Dundee to bring about new job creation (Dundee City Council, 1998). While there are accepted examples of 'good practice' in culture-led regeneration, acceptance and application of such good practice would seem to be frequently based not on formal evaluation or analysis, but largely on anecdotal grounds. The process of policy transfer may therefore be one of 'serial replication' rather than sensitive adaptations to context that take into account the peculiarities and specificities of local aims and circumstances.

At the heart of these concerns is the credibility of such 'good practice' elements. Many cities have used such elements with evidence of success, but, as indicated at the outset of this article, the core concept of 'cultural quarters', in its present state, appears rather incoherent and contradictory, being built upon flimsy theoretical foundations. Consequently, it may be suggested that such 'good practice' elements may simply be the accretions of practice successful in different contexts for different reasons.

Replication may not therefore bring about intended outcomes, and may instead lead to formulaic and derivative results which risk the loss of the very identity which formed the basis of the area's original attraction.

In Dundee, a process of replication may have been aided by the out-sourcing of the original feasibility study for the Cultural Quarter, since this was prepared externally on a consultancy basis, rather than in-house within Dundee City Council, a process that was considered necessary by Dundee City Council because of the specialist nature of the expertise required (personal interview). Such out-sourcing invites the possibility of replication of processes, models and mechanisms, particularly since there are only a small number of agents with the relevant expertise, though of course it equally allows the possibility of cross-fertilisation of good practice between contexts. A process of out-sourcing of feasibility studies is commonplace in relation to cultural quarter designation in UK cities (McCarthy, 2004).

In terms of the policies for and components within Dundee's Cultural Quarter, the original feasibility report for the Quarter stressed the need for local embeddedness, and argued for an emphasis on local distinctiveness by building on local strengths such as digital media (EDAW and Urban Cultures, 2000). Moreover, the need to avoid a context-independent approach was acknowledged by the City Council at an early stage, with a recognition of the need to build on local strengths illustrated by the proposals for the Digital Media Park. However, many other elements suggested for Dundee's Cultural Quarter would appear to reflect practice demonstrated in many, if not most, designated cultural quarters in UK cities. Such elements include the development of new workspaces, new facilities such as a new medium-sized music venue, new rehearsal spaces, a new gallery/exhibition space, new cafes, bars and restaurants, and new residential spaces. While such components may be seen as core elements of good practice for sustainable culture-led regeneration, it is less clear how they link to Dundee's existing capacities and strengths.

The issue is therefore not merely the 'opportunity cost' arising from the degree of attention on, and replication of, cultural quarters as a policy mechanism. It is also the risk of such mechanisms proving to be counter-productive if the loss of local distinctiveness arising from serial replication leads ultimately to a loss of competitive advantage, for instance in terms of attracting tourism-related income. Hence local

differentiation and distinctiveness of identity and culture may be compromised by a homogeneous cultural landscape (Garcia, 2004), a process that is reinforced by the convergence of economic, social and spatial planning policy in relation to culture-led regeneration. This may mean that the perceived authenticity of heritage attractions, for instance, is threatened. The commodification of culture and heritage, with its associated effects of gentrification and displacement, may therefore destroy the very appeal that provided the original impetus for policy attention. In addition, it may serve to erode existing cultural capacity (Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004) and stifle the emergence of further cultural and artistic creativity (Wilks-Heeg and North, 2004). Furthermore, experience in other locations also points to the similarities in approach to policy-setting within 'cultural quarters'; indeed, the 'cultural quarter' mechanism seems to now be applied in some form to virtually all UK cities, often with broadly-similar strategies and components (McCarthy, 2004; Dungey, 2004).

In relation to the second, linked issue, it may be argued that Dundee's Cultural Quarter has prioritised elements in relation to image enhancement, in the context of economic and social decline and increasing city competition for investment and employment. This may be linked to a relative failure to engage directly with the city's history and cultural identity in terms of the Cultural Quarter. In order to 'unpack' this issue, the concept of 'city image' and 're-imaging' will first be re-appraised.

As indicated above, many cities have sought to apply strategies of 'city marketing' or 'place marketing' that are linked to the need for cities to increasingly compete for employment and investment (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). Such processes may involve 'hard branding' by means of the development of iconic buildings that provide new cultural landmarks (Richards and Wilson, 2004; Smyth, 1994). This contributes to a broader process of 're-imaging' pursued particularly within cities that have suffered historically from a poor image (Neill, 1995), and such a process may involve the creation of new forms of identity by means of the imposition of one powerful image upon others. However, such a hegemonic process clearly militates against the parallel need for an embedding with local collective identities. Moreover, city images are multifaceted and differentiated, so that different groups perceive different images; hence the notion of a 'shared' image is suspect, and the projection of a dominant city image may fail to reflect the complexities of reality (Avraham, 2004).

The case of Dundee appears to illustrate these issues. Certainly, the policy emphasis upon image enhancement is evident in much corporate documentation (Dundee City Council, 2001; Dundee City Council, 2004). This is clearly part of a broader strategy at corporate level, aimed at enhancing the city's image, and supported by the 'City of Discovery' marketing campaign. Partly because of such initiatives, the City Council asserts that 'Much has been achieved in altering the perception of Dundee, particularly within the media, resulting in more positive coverage' (Dundee City Council, 2004, p. 11). This process is seen as critical by the City Council in addressing issues of population loss and lack of investment, linked to the historical legacy of a poor city image. Hence the City Council aims to change the city's image to meet the requirements of corporate capital within an environment of rigorous city competition. This pervades much related policy, including that for public art; for instance, the objectives of the Ambassador Routes Project, designed to upgrade the main road corridors into Dundee, include creating a memorable image of Dundee, producing iconic images and raising the city's international profile (McGilvray, 2001).

The assumption of the capacity of 'flagship' cultural attractions to underpin image enhancement aims would also seem to apply in the case of Dundee's Cultural Quarter. In particular, it is significant that the DCA, completed in 1999, has formed perhaps the centrepiece of an implicit image enhancement strategy for the city as a whole over the last twenty years. This was foreshadowed by the city's Arts Action Plan (Dundee City Council, 1997), which first proposed a new contemporary arts centre, and which also prioritised the use of arts and culture in the city as a primary means of image enhancement. While DCA was developed prior to designation of the Quarter, the opening of the building was used to bring about a major shift in perception of the city, in part because of the city's success in attracting a large number of journalists from the mainstream media to report the event. As a consequence, a number of articles appeared in national newspapers extolling the virtues of a city they had clearly previously dismissed.

The success of the DCA in attracting visitors has since proved to be substantial, and a study of its economic impact concluded in 2003 that the 'DCA effect' was broadly-based, generating 240 jobs and contributing to the wider city in terms of the retention of staff, attraction of students, and attraction of investment. The DCA was also critical in attracting retail investment in the nearby Overgate Shopping Centre (Westbrook, 2003).

In relation to the Cultural Quarter, the study suggested that development of the DCA had sustained the 'critical mass' necessary to allow the Quarter to function. Indeed, completion of the DCA was followed in 2000 by that of the 'Sensation' Science Centre on an adjacent site just outside the Cultural Quarter.

The DCA therefore provides evidence both of Dundee's priority of image enhancement, and of the potential power of iconic projects in this respect. However, as Evans (2003) suggests, the cost of strategies linked to cultural commodification and hard-branding of cities is felt in terms of limited cultural diversity and community cultural activity, and impacts predominantly on those with no clear stake in the process of gentrification. In Dundee, in spite of the outreach work of DCA, many of the city's residents in more peripheral areas are largely unaware of the Cultural Quarter, perhaps in part a reflection of a lack of consultation linked to the City's strategy of cultural regeneration and its designation of the Cultural Quarter (Montgomery, 2004). The reliance on the power of iconic development projects to create or shape cultural identity, rather than allowing established historical, social or cultural identity to take effect, may therefore be misplaced.

In addition, as indicated previously, there is the risk of homogenisation within such a 'hard branding' approach, since it 'leads to a paradox whereby those cities seeking to differentiate themselves and escape routine identities tend to end up striving for similar urban and cultural landscapes' (Richards and Wilson, 2004). This is endorsed by Evans (2003) who shows how city branding may promote a cultural homogeneity and convergence that erodes local distinctiveness, with the added risk of 'brand decay' as a brand becomes outdated and loses its impact. While the impact of such processes may be felt only in the medium-long term, it is important for any strategy for Cultural Quarter development to be sensitive to the potential risks.

Nevertheless, the narrative of 'hard branding' linked to iconic developments aimed at 're-imaging', with limited local involvement and benefits, only partly fits the history of cultural regeneration in Dundee. A useful distinction in this context may be made between 'local history' and 'local distinctiveness'. While many aspects of the Cultural Quarter do not appear to directly reflect the city's history, initiatives such as the encouragement of the digital media sector clearly reflect a building upon existing economic capacities. This highlights the potential for cultural regeneration strategies to

emphasise and harness the particularities of place, if the 'default' mode of serial replication is resisted.

## **Conclusions**

While culture-based strategies demonstrate evident potential for regeneration, the lack of a clear conceptual and evidential framework in relation to 'cultural quarters' continues to present an obstacle to the effective delivery of outcomes, and increases the risk of either limited additionality or indeed counter-productive effects, linked to the derivative nature of strategies, the priority for image enhancement and the homogenisation of cultural milieus. While it shows some evidence of linkage to local economic strengths, the case of Dundee's Cultural Quarter also appears to illustrate these factors, and suggests the need for consideration of approaches that link more directly to local identities. Such consideration is of critical importance on a wider basis given the replication of the 'cultural quarter' regeneration mechanism in many urban contexts in the UK.

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## **PAPER FOUR**

### **REGENERATION OF CULTURAL QUARTERS: PUBLIC ART FOR PLACE IMAGE OR PLACE IDENTITY?**

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#### **Abstract**

Cities are increasingly seeking to encourage culture-related uses in particular areas, often designated as ‘cultural quarters’, to achieve regeneration outcomes, and public art is often applied in such quarters in order to promote place image and to enhance local identity. However, it may be argued that these aims are potentially contradictory, since the image that is projected may not necessarily reflect local identity. This is a critical issue in view of the need to achieve regeneration outcomes that are inclusive, broadly-based and context-sensitive. Nevertheless, the cases of public art schemes in Manchester’s Northern Quarter and Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter suggest that it is feasible to integrate aims in relation to image and identity by means of public art, and that the use of historical associations can provide a valuable means of linking image and identity.

#### **Introduction**

‘Culture-led’ approaches to urban regeneration, involving the encouragement of culture-related uses and activities to bring about broader social, economic and environmental regeneration outcomes, are increasingly being applied in many cities (Bianchini, 1993; Ebert *et al*, 1994; McCarthy, 1998) since such approaches can lead to economic innovation and diversification (Williams, 1997; Mommaas, 2004; Scott, 2004), image enhancement (Ashworth and Voogt, 1990; Miles, 2005b) and social cohesion (Matarasso, 1997, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999, Scottish Executive, 2000). However, Evans (2005) distinguishes between ‘culture-led’ regeneration approaches, and ‘cultural regeneration’. ‘Culture-led’ approaches, he suggests, involve the use of cultural activity as the main driver of regeneration, with such activity assuming prominence as a symbol of regeneration activity. This is commonly related to the use of what have been called ‘cultural flagships’, namely major cultural uses such as

museums or art galleries, perhaps incorporating associated uses such as restaurants, and forming part of mixed-use areas. By contrast, 'cultural regeneration', Evans suggests, involves the integration of cultural activity into a broader strategy within which cultural uses do not have overall prominence. Thus, within 'cultural regeneration' approaches, cultural initiatives sit alongside other elements of regeneration, and do not act in themselves as a driving force for regeneration.

Within 'culture-led' approaches, a popular policy mechanism has become the designation of 'cultural quarters', where a 'critical mass' of culture-related activity is seen as providing the basis for anticipated regeneration outcomes. This process reflects the contemporary trend to identify distinct social and spatial areas within cities (Bell and Jayne, 2004), and a 'cultural quarter' may be defined as a spatially limited and distinct area that contains a high concentration of cultural facilities compared with other areas (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000). Such designation, either formally in spatial plans or informally in other policy documents, encourages further spatial concentration of such culture-related uses, since this is assumed to lead to use complementarities, synergies, agglomeration economies and minimisation of amenity loss (Evans, 2001; Richards 2001a, 2001b).

However, the value of cultural quarter designation is disputed (McCarthy, 2006), and it seems clear that to be effective such quarters must take account of physical and design-related factors as well as broader issues such as relationship to local identity (Montgomery, 1995, 2003; McCarthy, 2006). In this context, it may be suggested that public art within cultural quarters can, if integrated with other elements of regeneration, play a key role in enhancing or strengthening place or local identity, which in turn can increase the potential of such quarters to encourage creativity and innovation and bring broader regeneration outcomes. However, the extent to which public art in such contexts enhances or reflects local identities is problematic, since it can also reflect hegemonic images of the city as a consequence of place branding priorities, which can lead to homogeneity and erosion of distinctiveness if applied as part of a process of serial replication rather than sensitive adaptation to context. Such issues are particularly important in view of the burgeoning practice of cultural quarter designation and associated development of public art.

This article presents case studies of the provision of public art in two cultural quarters, namely Belfast's Cathedral Quarter and Manchester's Northern Quarter, in order to assess how such art is linked to local identity and/or image enhancement, with implications for the potential contribution of public art to wider aims for 'culture-led' regeneration. It is structured as follows. First, the broader conceptual frameworks in connection with public art, identity and image are set out; second, the two case studies of public art initiatives are considered; third, an analysis is made of the issues arising from the case studies in terms of public art and competing priorities of linkage with identity, and place promotion via image enhancement; and finally, broad conclusions are suggested.

### **Public art, identity and image**

Public art may be defined as site specific art in the public domain. Such art has arguably undergone something of a renaissance in recent decades, with increasing public and private sector commissions and an expansion of arts policy as well as the involvement of artists in many areas with broader urban design and regeneration initiatives (Hall and Smith, 2005). Indeed, public art would seem to be fulfilling an increasing range of roles linked to economic, social and physical regeneration, in line with the increasing emphasis on such regeneration at all levels of government. Partly as a result, the subject of public art has generated an extensive literature, as reflected in Miles (1997). In addition to the dissemination of what is regarded as good practice, more recent critiques have focused on problems of cultural capital, hegemony and representation as part of concepts of critical theory. The issue of public involvement has also formed a body of its own literature, starting the 1980s in the USA and recently reflected by Sharp *et al* (2005).

The literature indicates that public art can contribute to a range of aims with respect to regeneration. For instance, such art can contribute to the promotion of city image, including 're-imaging', where this is perceived as necessary to attract visitors and investment, and public art may therefore form part of wider promotional elements of city activity that has become necessary as a result of competition between cities globally for investment (Ashworth & Voogt, 1990; Avraham, 2004). In general terms, the role of public art can be seen as forming a spectrum ranging from aspects such as improving city legibility by acting a simple landmark (Porch, 2000), to wider roles such as

reflecting social criticism and reaction against the commodification of art (Miles, 1997). In terms of other regeneration objectives, public art can promote a sense of community as well as an awareness of local or civic identity, promote social network development and sense of place, educate, and provoke social change (Hall and Robertson, 2001). It can promote cultural diversity, and encourage integration of marginalised groups, particularly where such groups participate in the process of creation of art projects (Hall and Smith, 2005). It can also signal and promote the desire of local authorities and other agents to regenerate defined areas, enhance vitality and vibrancy, and can also be transformative in pointing the way for new and innovative directions for the area (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000). Thus public art would seem to play an important role in culture-led urban regeneration, since it may work on many different levels, and can be adapted to local needs and circumstances.

However, the benefits of public art, even within cultural quarters, may be challenged, and claims for such art have often been proved to be unsupportable. For instance, Selwood (1995) suggests that public art often fails to meet the needs of local communities and environments, with stated objectives for public art sometimes proving to be self-fulfilling, and the ambiguity in many public sector justifications of spending on culture-led regeneration, including public art, can be questioned (Miles, 2005a). Public art may also be mechanistic and contrived, as was arguably the case for much recent public art in Sheffield, which may be argued to have been ‘presented as decorative additions to cover poor and cheap building design and co-opted to provide ornamental security gates for new apartments’ (Hewitt and Jordan, 2005, p. 112). In addition, public art may contribute to a de-politicisation of regeneration aims and practice (Hamilton *et al*, 2001). Furthermore, in terms of a presumed contribution to social integration, it must be acknowledged that communities frequently lack cohesion, so that the creation of an apparent veneer of integration may be harmful, and the extent to which benefits are sustainable in the longer term may be questioned. Moreover, Miles (2005a) suggests that public art may simply reproduce public sector ‘official’ aims, and thereby undercut the traditional role of the artist as critic of the status quo, reducing them to ‘low-grade problem-solvers’ (Miles, 2005a). This concern is echoed by those who suggest that public art should seek to encourage dissent rather than to ascribe to a bland consensus or myth of shared option and values (Sharp *et al*, 2005).



The issue of public art is bound up with that of place identity, in that many observers suggest that such art should reflect or even strengthen local identity (Miles, 2005b). Identity in this context is a socio-spatial concept in that people themselves endow places with meaning, leading to identification with shared characteristics between groups within a locality (Neill, 2004). A distinction here must be made between 'image' and 'identity'; while 'image' relates to the summation of the impressions that people have of a city, 'identity' relates to a city's history and circumstances, which imbue it with a degree of distinctiveness. In other words, identity relates to the city's character, and, where such character is relatively weak, the creation of a new or different city image may be sought. Thus image creation may underpin identity formation. However, local identities are socially constructed, and produced and reproduced as a communicative process. Hence local identities cannot be taken for granted as some kind of 'given'; instead, they are processual, and evolve and adapt over time, particularly in the marginalised spaces of cities that are often the sites for designated cultural quarters or clusters (Miles, 2004). Indeed, Julier (2005, p. 885) suggests that the development of a place identity is 'a process of appropriation and reappropriation rather than invention'. Furthermore, even within small localities, local identities may be multiple and possibly divergent or conflictual, and weak identity may be linked to that of social exclusion, which commonly involves 'a weakened or non-existent sense of identity and pride' (Griffiths, 1999, p. 463). Thus local identity is an amorphous and dynamic concept, with linkages to many other aspects of regeneration.

In fact the literature in relation to identity formulation in urban centres, and the linkage to the use of aesthetic mechanisms or artefacts, would seem to fall into two categories. First, much literature makes reference to built form and physical artefacts, particularly architecture, with for instance the use of iconic buildings to create 'objectivated cultural capital' (Leach, 2002, p. 283, quoted in Julier, 2005, p. 871). Second, the discourse of marketing and place branding attempts to show how cultural and aesthetic capital can be mobilised and orchestrated so as to promote a city or area with the primary aim of achieving economic benefits such as increased visitor numbers and investment. However, there would seem to be little clear empirical justification of either of these approaches, particularly where they are linked to the use of public art, and the application of aesthetic mechanisms such as public art perhaps necessarily involves a degree of subjectivity in terms of both aims and perception of outcomes.

Hence spatial, cultural and social identities may all be influenced by public art, which can explore aspects of local history, for instance, which in turn can help shape such identities. As such, public art may serve as a key component of cultural regeneration strategies that seek to achieve social outcomes linked to the strengthening of local identity and the enhancement of collective self-confidence, by tapping into traditions already in existence. As Miles (2005b, p. 921) suggests, ‘investment in culture is not simply about regenerating the local economy, but can actually serve to revitalise the identities of the people of a city and even of a region; ... [and] ... it can provide new ways for those people to look into themselves and out of themselves. In other words, it can reinvigorate the relationship between cultural, place and personal identity and offer a permanent legacy’. Such reinvigoration may be seen as a critical component of wider regeneration strategies that seek to improve external image by means of ‘branding’, as well as enhancement of self-image within localities (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005; Ashworth and Voogt, 1990; Evans, 2003, 2004). ‘Branding’ in this context is seen to potentially provide a link between individual and collective identities, and to imbue localities with a sense of belonging, for instance to a city or indeed a region or nation (Evans, 2003). Such branding can therefore reinforce a sense of local identity. This, however, leads to questions of how revitalisation, enhancement or reinforcement of local identity can be measured, which is related to a broader issue in relation to public art provision, namely the lack of consideration of monitoring of its effects. Essentially, the benefits of public art would often seem to be assumed rather than demonstrated, and there is little objective monitoring of such (direct or indirect) effects. Again, this may be linked to the subjectivity inherent in the way public art is generated and received.

Moreover, the creation of new ‘brand identities’ is problematic, with for instance the danger of ‘brand decay’, as the created image ceases to be relevant (Julier, 2005). Furthermore, the mechanistic use of place imaging strategies may run contrary to local identities if such strategies seek to re-shape identities without engaging with local communities. This is related to the issue of homogeneity, since cultural regeneration strategies, and cultural quarters in particular, often seem to present a formulaic approach, resulting from serial replication, that ultimately leads to cultural quarters in different cities becoming more like each other (Miles, 2005b; Julier, 2005). In addition, some have questioned the fundamental notion that public art must be linked to location and context, and thereby local identity, since it may equally be argued that such art should instead reflect a wider notion of what is public (Miles, 1997). Issues of identity

and the use of public art are also bound up with notions of authenticity and integrity, which may be seen to be eroded as a consequence of the process of commodification of art. This is linked to the gentrification process that is often observed as part of ‘culture-led’ regeneration approaches (Zukin, 1995; Cameron and Coaffee, 2005).

The problematisation of such issues in relation to public art and identity is reflected in the disputed notions in relation to common assumptions of good practice. For instance, it may be suggested that there is a need for public art to reflect the local context, and sense of place or collective self-image (Porch, 2000), even when new iconic symbols are used (Breen and Rigby, 1996). This may be done by reflecting local histories (Miles, 2004; Evans, 2004); however, some suggest the need to prioritise ‘up-to-the-minuteness’ and modernity (Julier, 2005; Montgomery, 1995), and others highlight the danger that historical reflection may simply involve nostalgia and the re-production of myths (Sharp *et al*, 2005). In addition, while it is often assumed that public art should involve maximum engagement with local communities so as to developing a sense of community and self-esteem, it may also be suggested that the resulting benefits are unsustainable unless there is follow-up action (Bennett *et al*, 2005). It may also be assumed that there needs to be a high degree of flexibility within the roles of artists involved, to ensure an innovative and diverse approach, though it may equally be suggested that flexibility in the parameters for artistic contribution may result in homogeneity and lack of concern for the needs of divergent communities. Indeed, many local authorities and other institutional sponsors are producing public art strategies and other guidance that seek to constrain the work of public artists so as to ensure diversity of provision (London Borough of Croydon, 2005; Bristol City Council, 2000) and the need for artworks at a range of scales (Sharp *et al*, 2005), as well as contribution to aims such as legibility of the area by encouragement of landmarks, signposts or gateways (Miles, 2005a).

It is clear therefore that the linkage of public art and identity and/or image in order to bring about ‘culture-led’ regeneration outcomes within cultural quarters is disputed and problematic at both the conceptual and practice levels. In order to explore these issues further, the author conducted research in two cities, applying a case study approach. The cases were selected on the basis of their location as public art initiatives within a ‘cultural quarter’, and their contrasting elements. In particular, in terms of designation, the Belfast case is set within a formally-designated cultural quarter (set out within a

spatial plan), while the Manchester case is set within an informal quarter (acknowledged in wider policy terms and in terms of city promotion documents, but not in formal planning policy). The cases also contrast in terms of approach, with that of Belfast illustrating the application of a high degree of control and guidance, and that of Manchester illustrating a high degree of flexibility. The aim of the research was to explore the linkage of public art and local identity and/or image, and to ascertain how this impacted on the artworks produced as well on broader aims for ‘culture-led’ regeneration. The research questions were as follows: (1) is the aim of public art in cultural quarters to promote image externally (outside the city), or to reflect image internally (within the city) or both?; (2) to what extent can such aims be integrated?; and (3) what does this indicate for ‘best practice’ in the application of ‘culture-led’ regeneration? The research was carried out by documentary analysis as well as structured interviews of key officers of the City Council. The cases are considered below.

### **Manchester’s Northern Quarter Public Art Scheme**

#### *Context, origins and goals*

Manchester’s Northern Quarter is an area of 56 acres immediately to the north of the city centre. It was historically the centre of the city’s market activity, and the wholesale fashion industry. However, in the latter part of the last century the area began to decline, partly as a result of the decline of the textiles industry generally. The origin of the Northern Quarter as an informal cultural quarter emerged in the early 1990s as a result of the success in the area of Affleck’s Palace, a retail emporium, followed by the Dry Bar (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000), building on the presence of live music venues in the area. A key advantage of the area for culture-related uses was seen as being the cheapness of the property compared with the nearby city centre, and initial funding for environmental improvements and public art was obtained from the City Council, the European Regional Development Fund, and the National Heritage Lottery Fund (personal interview with City Council planning officer).

While the Northern Quarter does not have formally-designated status as a cultural quarter, the City Council aims to retain and enhance the diversity in the area by

supporting creative uses, as well as other compatible uses including residential (with affordable housing particularly encouraged) and entertainment uses, and to improve the 'evening economy' of the area. Perhaps the most important objective, however, is to bring vacant floorspace – which is very prevalent in the area – back into productive use. By such means it is intended to foster a cluster of creativity and innovation as part of a wider mix of uses that contribute significantly to the wider city economy. Partly as a consequence, by 2005 the area had become a focus of creative industries including associated back-up services; for instance, a local business produces covers for CDs (personal interview with City Council planning officer).

The Northern Quarter Public Art Scheme was prompted by the implementation of an environmental improvement scheme on Tib Street in 1996. The Public Art Scheme was intended to develop artworks that could express and reflect the unique cultural identity of the area, and that involved local people, as well as contributing to wider aims for 'culture-led' regeneration including education and quality of life. A 'long list' of fifty artists as possible contributors was created, from which twenty indicated that they wished to be involved, and a range of art was anticipated, including decorative art and applied art in Phase 1, and site markers and iconic gateway projects in Phase 2. The scheme was developed around the Tib Street Corridor, which provided a narrow geographical space that meant that there was insufficient room for large scale artworks, consequently many pieces were integrated with pavements and walls, and specific elements include street signs, poetry in paving, tiling work, and a neon light tower. The linear orientation of the area contributed to the decision to link the artworks in the Quarter by means of an 'art trail', which is also intended to provide an added visitor attraction. The governing concept for the public art scheme is 'warp and weft', whereby a number of separate small strands are intended to lead to the creation of an enigmatic puzzle. The analogy is taken from the textiles trade in terms of the weave of cloth, with the warp representing Tib Street and the weft representing the adjacent cross-cutting streets. While some artists suggested that the art trail was contributing to a 'disneyfication' of the area, with the need to allow visitors and others to discover the area's 'hidden treasures' for themselves, an evaluation of the art trail indicated its potential to act as a visitor attraction (Nowakowski and Walker, 1999).

An important innovation within the scheme was the research of local history as a means of allowing artworks to reflect this aspect of local identity. The history of Tib Street

goes back to 1783, and the City Council supplied artists with a historical portfolio of the area, which was initially prosperous but suffered from degeneration in the last century. Important industries in the area had comprised textiles, boot and shoe manufacture, hat and shoe making, and selling of pets, and several of these activities are reflected in artworks, for instance in a series of ceramic plaques and murals reflecting historical elements, iconic motifs of birds, and a sculpture made of recycled industrial parts which reflects more recent history. The largest artwork, a 90 foot high neon light tower by Peter Freeman, links instead to the recent growth of evening uses in the area. Overall, the artworks range from a £500 to a £30,000 commission, representing the smallest public artwork in the city (inset tiles) as well as the largest (the neon light tower).

### *Management and co-ordination*

The scheme was co-ordinated by lead artist Liam Curtin, and was initially managed by a partnership of the City Council and the Northern Quarter Association, a self-organised group with 130 members drawn from the major stakeholders within the area, including local traders and residents (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000). Funding was provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£200,000), European Regional Development Fund and the City Council, with additional funds provided via sponsorship from local development company Urban Splash and others (personal interview with planning officer). Decisions in relation to particular artworks were made by the management group, the Northern Quarter Management Committee, and a Steering Group. Local people were involved in the development of the project, as well as in the creation of some artworks, with spin-off benefits including education. An important innovation of the scheme was the method of commissioning, which involved an extremely flexible approach. Essentially, this involved an 'open' brief within which artists were allowed to choose their own sites for artworks, develop their own briefs and thereby retain a large degree of control over the parameters within which their work is situated. This process was extremely unusual, as was the elaborateness of the public consultation measures, and in both these features the scheme is unlike others in Manchester (Nowakowski and Walker, 1999).

## *Evaluation*

While the theme of ‘warp and weft’ provided a loose strategy in order to avoid overly constraining the artists involved, and enable an organic and piecemeal approach to artwork development, aided by the ‘open brief’ arrangement, it may be suggested that the scheme would have benefited from a more coherent strategy that would have allowed artists a more structured framework within which to work (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000). Indeed, many of the artists themselves suggested that the guidance was too loose, leading to a degree of confusion in terms of what was expected and the process by which the final product would be approved, and some artists suggested that tighter, more defined guidance and briefs, indicating the particular sites for artworks as well as the funding attached, need not act as a constraint, but could rather be seen as liberating. In fact an evaluation of the scheme was subsequently commissioned to consultants by the City Council. This evaluation, which applied a range of methods including interviews with key actors such as artists, local residents and City Council officers, recommended a clearer strategic project plan with a tighter commissioning process, albeit with artists being encouraged to contribute suggestions for extending or developing the brief (Nowakowski and Walker, 1999).

Consultation procedures for the public arts scheme were evidently thorough, with many local residents and businesses involved, and up to 45 artists attending the ‘Big Jam’ open-forum consultation sessions, though the process of linking consultation results to artworks was felt to be confusing by many artists (Nowakowski and Walker, 1999). Nevertheless, the resulting mix of works was popular with local people, with the Light Tower in particular helping to raise the profile of the area as well as acting as an important landmark. The evaluation of the scheme notes that the emphasis on local consultation led to a strong local identification with the scheme, which was seen as contributing to the development of the area’s identity. However, it also indicates the danger of an over-reliance on such a ‘localist’ approach, with a parallel need for external help and expertise, and recommends the inclusion of more signature artworks and major commissions for the future. Hence it acknowledges a conflict between the aims of addressing local identity and of providing a project of national standing and significance. In addition, some artists suggested that the reflection of the area’s history within artworks was not crucial, with some public art justified with reference to such

associations rather than intrinsic artistic quality, innovation or overall impact on the environment (Nowakowski and Walker, 1999).

Overall, the evaluation of the scheme concludes that the artworks in the area were appropriately varied in scale, choice of materials, and points of inspiration. It indicates a high degree of local recognition and popularity in relation to the scheme amongst residents, businesses, artists, councillors, council officers and the general public, and shows that the scheme engendered a strong sense of local identity. It also highlights that the scheme made a significant impact on the environment and the cultural life of the area, promoted the area as a creative quarter, provided a range of opportunities for local artists, and conferred benefits upon all major stakeholders in the area, with visitors to the area also showing significant appreciation for the scheme (Nowakowski and Walker, 1999).

## **Belfast's Cathedral Quarter Public Art Scheme**

### *Context, origins and goals*

Like Manchester's Northern Quarter, Belfast's Cathedral Quarter, focused around St Anne's Cathedral, is one of the oldest districts in the city. However, during the 1980s, the revitalisation of the main central business district of the city, to the south, meant that there was less development pressure in the Cathedral Quarter area, and the decline of commercial and retail uses left vacant sites and underused buildings. This, combined with the possibility of short leases, led to the area becoming attractive to artists, and many community arts organisations located in the area. Partly as a consequence, the notion of 'cultural quarter' designation was proposed by the Laganside Corporation, a public body established by government in 1989 with the aim of socially and economically regenerating 140 hectares of land in inner Belfast, within which the area was located after the Corporation's boundary was extended. The Corporation seeks to use public investment to secure private development capital in order to achieve these outcomes, and it has powers for instance to acquire land and carry out relevant works, though it works closely in this respect with the City Council and other public bodies. The proposal for designation of a 'cultural quarter' was supported by many of the local businesses and residents, and the aim was to create a mixed use area, including artists'



studios, art galleries and a community arts forum as well as other related uses (Laganside Corporation, 2003). Following consultation with the local community, the area was named the Cathedral Quarter, and this area was later designated in the City Council's Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (Belfast City Council, 2004).

The Cathedral Quarter Strategy sets out the Corporation's aim to re-establish this area as a dynamic part of the city, and to build developer confidence in the area so as to achieve broad regeneration outcomes (Laganside Corporation, 2000). It was intended to retain the arts groups in the area, and more arts groups subsequently located in the area. In addition, the Corporation's Development Framework for the area identifies key development projects, including mixed uses with active ground floor uses, car parking facilities, apartments, offices, retail and leisure uses, and additional managed workspaces. Important aspirations of the Corporation for the area include a flagship arts centre to incorporate teaching facilities for the University of Ulster, a theatre complex, and residential uses (Laganside Corporation, 2003).

In terms of public art in the Quarter, the intention was to provide art that took account of the environment in which it was situated, and that showed evidence of a clear vision, effective implementation, and the use of clear benchmarks and quality standards. However, the public art in the Cathedral Quarter does not form a discrete scheme as in Manchester's Northern Quarter, but comprises part of the overall provision for public art within the Laganside Corporation area. The Laganside Public Art Strategy (Laganside Corporation, 2001) sets a context and framework for this provision, indicating the need to bring about public art that contributes to the creation of a strong local identity and sense of place, and that is recognisable nationally and internationally. In addition, detailed aims for artworks in the Cathedral Quarter are contained in the Brief for public art in this area (Laganside Corporation, 2000).

The Public Art Strategy sets out several specific criteria for selection of public art, including quality of design, imagery, materials, colour, texture, and context, as well as function and use of site. It also states that public art should reflect local history, and should incorporate smaller-scale community artworks that involve the community and improve quality of life. Overall, however, a clear emphasis on the prioritisation of development is contained in the Strategy's terms of reference, which state that the aim is to 'create distinct and memorable public spaces which are the setting for private

investment and for residential, commercial and leisure activity’ (Laganside Corporation, 2002, p. 7). Moreover, the Strategy states that the Corporation aims to ‘work in partnership with landowners, developers, artists and interest groups’ (Laganside Corporation, 2002, p. 7). Again, landowners and developers may be assumed by their placing in this list to be the key focus of partnership activity. This reflects the need for public art to fit the priorities of the Laganside Corporate Plan, namely to promote regeneration of development sites and to trigger private investment. Nevertheless, the Corporation also seeks to ensure that public art reflects the needs and wishes of a diverse community. In particular, it indicates that the symbolism inherent within public art is particularly important to groups relating to race, religion and disability, and it is intended to monitor and review all aspects of public art provision to ensure that such groups continue to be served by public art provision. In addition, the Public Art Strategy suggests that the provision of a robust artist brief and community input will lessen the risk of adverse impact on particular groups (Laganside Corporation, 2002).

As in Manchester’s Northern Quarter, reflection of the area’s historical associations was evident in many artworks, as this was required for many sites by the Cathedral Quarter Public Art Brief (Laganside Corporation, 2000). For instance, pieces include links to historical industries in the area, such as ‘Penny for Your Thoughts’ by Peter Rooney, which comprises cast iron sculptures highlighting the theme of commerce; and ‘Belfast Wheel and Cotton Court Signage’ by Belfast Wheel (a network of twelve artists) and Farhad Nargol-O’Neill, which incorporates signage for Cotton Court, a managed workspace centre. In addition, ‘Mapping History’ by Eleanor Wheeler, takes the form of a ceramic mural with a historical map of the area. Other pieces reflect the arts orientation of the area; for instance ‘Performance Space’, by Brian Connolly highlights the arts quarter theme by its formation as a small performance space, and ‘Fishing for Letters’ by Alan Dawson Associates, comprising steel railings, reflects the literary theme of Writer’s Square. As in the Manchester case, the artworks form part of a trail (as in other parts of the Corporation area), and the Corporation promotes public art extensively by means of ‘Arts Trail’ leaflets that set out the position of public art within the Corporation area along the three Public Art Trails, one of which runs through the Cathedral Quarter. This is linked to the Corporation’s aim to maximise the potential of the artworks as part of the area’s attraction to visitors (personal interview, Laganside Corporation).

### *Management and co-ordination*

Since they fell within the Laganside Corporation area, the Cathedral Quarter public artworks were managed by the Laganside Corporation. In terms of funding, the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and the Laganside Corporation each funded 50% of works on average, though this varied significantly in individual cases. A clear Brief for public art in the Quarter sets out the aims and objectives of the artworks programme, and this was widely distributed in the area (personal interview, Laganside Corporation). The contextual factors highlighted in the Brief relate in particular to the nature of the area as a Conservation Area with a distinctive streetscape and significant historical associations. The Brief indicates that artworks should maximise the use of space and enhance linkages between parts of the area, where appropriate, and that works should seek to reflect historical elements but also express contemporary art practice, as part of a high-quality street environment. Works were required to be robust, requiring low or minimal maintenance, and artists were required to work jointly with the design team, particularly the landscape architect (Laganside Corporation, 2000). Three commissions were initially offered, one for a 'Gateway Feature' on Gordon Street (which was required to consider lighting as element); one for Entrance Archways at Exchange Place / Commercial Court (which was also required to consider lighting as an essential element); and one for Street Features on Gordon Street, Exchange Place and Commercial Court (which was required to consider historic and themed features such as printer's blocks associated with the printing trade). The guidance was thus site specific, and the overall intention was to draw on the skills of a range of different artists with specialisms in different media (Laganside Corporation, 2000).

The artists were part of a wider design team that included Corporation staff, a consulting engineer, a landscape architect, civil, mechanical and electrical engineering advisors, a quantity surveyor and the statutory authorities, and submitting artists were required to attend a briefing meeting with members of the design team. Artists were asked to make a sketch of their concept, and a range of bodies were involved in the approval of final proposals. The members of the selection panel, the Laganside Arts Advisory Panel, included the Sculptural Society for Ireland, the Arts Association for Ireland, the Royal Ulster Architectural Society, and Belfast City Council. This Panel, chaired by the Laganside Corporation, made a final decision on the basis of a shortlist, applying criteria such as quality and professionalism. Overall, the process generated

much interest and many high-quality submissions, and several of the artists selected were locally-based, including Paddy McCann and Peter Rooney (personal interview, Laganside Corporation).

### *Evaluation*

Local communities were extensively consulted on public art proposals, and were represented on the Advisory Panel. As a further indication of the need for widespread support on an issue as sensitive as public art, the consultation document that led to the Public Art Strategy was sent to fifty separate organisations for comment, and a further sixty individuals (often artists) and organisations were notified that the document was available. One such organisation, the Cathedral Forum, itself consists of around one hundred individuals and organisations. In terms of outcomes, attitude surveys showed that public art in the area was viewed positively by the public, and the process of developing the public art appeared to be more effective than in some other parts of the Corporation area, possibly because the aims for public art in such areas were not as clearly stated as in the Cathedral Quarter. Overall, the public artworks would seem to have contributed to wider ‘culture-led’ regeneration processes in the Quarter, as indicated for instance by the number of arts organisations in the area increasing from twenty, before the designation of the Quarter, to fifty in 2005 (personal interview, Laganside Corporation).

### **Analysis**

The cases of public art provision set out above illuminate many aspects of the linkage between public art initiatives and the enhancement of local identities and/or enhancement of area image in cultural quarters. In particular, three issues or themes may be identified in this respect, namely application of aims for public art, including integration with wider culture-led regeneration aims as well as those for image enhancement and place promotion; context sensitivity of the schemes, in terms of linkage with local identities; and the mechanisms applied, in terms of how these were used to achieve the aims. In terms of aims, those for the Northern Quarter scheme were wide-ranging and related to broader aspects of regeneration such as education and quality of life, but they also reflected an emphasis on encouraging creativity, vibrancy

and innovation within the streetscape, as appropriate for an emergent creative zone. This would seem to have contributed to the orientation of the scheme in terms of its distinctiveness and its alignment with what is a notional cultural quarter. Similarly, in the Cathedral Quarter, while the overall policy and framework for public art provision is set for the Corporation area as a whole, the Brief produced for artworks in the Cathedral Quarter, and distributed for consultation, indicates that each piece is intended to closely reflect its context. As a consequence, several of the works within the Cathedral Quarter, such as the iron railings in Writers' Square, clearly demonstrate a link to the cultural orientation of the Quarter. Thus, in both cases, a clear contribution has been made to creating a distinctive character for the cultural quarter and thereby contributing to overall aims for 'culture-led' regeneration.

In relation to aims for image enhancement, while the aims of the Northern Quarter public art scheme do not make explicit reference to image enhancement or place promotion, this area has come to be a signifier for 'Manchesterness' as promoted by the City authorities by means of design orientation (Julier, 2005), and the City Council now identifies the boundaries of the Northern Quarter on maps within its promotional literature, together with other 'quarters'. Thus the public art scheme, in its innovation and encouragement of local participation, would seem to have contributed to a re-orientation of image rather than more fundamental 're-imaging', though there was some conflict between the aims of enhancing local identity and of creating nationally-significant projects. In the case of the Cathedral Quarter, there was an explicit attempt to enhance and promote a distinctive image, not just for the area, but also for the city. Thus image enhancement and place promotion would seem to have played an important part in the public art schemes in both contexts, building upon the valued associations of a cultural milieu, but with such elements more overt, and more clearly dominant, in the case of the Cathedral Quarter. Both schemes also applied 'art trails', which aided the promotion of the areas as visitor attractions (personal interview, Laganside Corporation; Nowakowski and Walker, 1999). While there was concern by some artists in Manchester that this reflected an element of cultural commodification, there is little evidence that such approaches detracted from overall aims for 'culture-led' regeneration, including adherence to principles of authenticity combined with genuine artistic innovation. Indeed, a degree of innovation was commended by local residents in Manchester in the case of the Light Tower artwork for instance.

The orientation of the institutional sponsors of the public art initiatives would seem to have been a crucial factor in relation to these issues. In Manchester, the public art scheme was managed with the close involvement of the City Council, while in Belfast the sponsor was the Laganside Corporation, with a remit focused on physical development. Hence, in the Cathedral Quarter, while secondary objectives of public art relate to aspects such as reflection of local identity and involvement of local communities, a primary aim relates to the improvement of the public realm and the attraction of private funding for development. Public art would therefore seem to be particularly directed to investors and developers, and it is significant that perceived 'models' of good practice included the Newcastle Urban Development Corporation, which had provided a range of public art works alongside public walkways, and Brindley Place in Birmingham (personal interview, Laganside Corporation), both of which could be argued to have prioritised development promotion. Nevertheless, the differences between the cases of Manchester and Belfast with respect to place promotion should not be over-emphasised, and both adhere to an approach within which such promotion is a key component. Perhaps the key difference is that in Belfast this was indicated at the outset, linked to the priorities of the Laganside Corporation and the need to widely promote a city which has suffered from a negative image. By contrast, in Manchester a promotional emphasis appeared to emerge as a result of wider processes resulting in increased culture-related activity, combined with the success of the scheme in melding a range of elements that added to the distinctiveness of the area in design terms.

In terms of context sensitivity and reflection of local identities, it is significant that in both cases there was an explicit emphasis on the need to relate artworks to local history, largely because both contexts involved important and distinctive historical associations. In Manchester this was done by means of a historical portfolio supplied to artists, and in Belfast this was reflected in the Brief for artworks in the area. It may seem ironic that this approach was disputed rather more in the case of Manchester, where some artists suggested that the use of history could be seen as merely reflecting a nostalgic view (though residents commended an element of innovation and experimentation), rather than in Belfast, where history and identity remains particularly disputed and fragmented. In fact, an interviewee from the Laganside Corporation suggested that the cultural and religious divisions in the city, together with its conflicted past (and present), did not pose an issue in the Cathedral Quarter, since this area had its own

distinctive historical associations as the original site for much of the city's economic activity. This, in conjunction with the necessity – given the trenchant political divisions inherent in the city as a whole – for rigorous and transparent procedures to ensure fairness and representation of all groups in decision-making, meant that conflicted identities were not problematic. This suggests that, if an attempt is made to reflect the authentic associations of the local context, such an attempt can be popularly supported in spite of a fragmented and diverse, and even divergent, community. Indeed, the case of the Laganside Quarter shows that such action can contribute to increasing social cohesion. Thus the reservations in this respect embedded in much of the literature do not seem to be reflected in these cases.

In terms of the specific mechanisms applied in connection with public art, and their use to achieve overall aims, the case of Manchester is very distinctive in its application of relatively loose, fluid and flexible processes, whereby briefs were 'negotiated' with the artists involved, rather than set beforehand. In addition, innovative participation methods were applied, such as the 'Big Jam' open forum sessions. These were welcomed in terms of facilitating wide involvement and generating ideas and innovation, though they added to the apparent confusion and shifting parameters from the point of view of the artists involved. By contrast, the Laganside Corporation's mechanisms and processes appear heavily quality-oriented and deterministic, as reflected in the detailed and rigorous procedures in connection with briefing, tendering and selection arrangements, as well as the emphasis on quality and benchmarks, and the rigorous if standardised and traditional approach to consultation. These procedures had the benefit of conferring and demonstrating a high degree of objectivity and fairness in the context of fractured communities and interests. Hence the differences in procedures may be explained in large part by the different orientations and terms of reference of the institutional sponsors, as well as the local context.

In addition, however, the counter-intuitive response of the artists themselves to the mechanisms applied indicates that some common assumptions appear to be misplaced, particularly in terms of the need for flexibility in guidance. Hence in the Manchester case, many artists expressed a clear preference for tighter, more rigorous and detailed guidance, both in terms of broad frameworks in relation to design, and detailed briefs for particular works, since they often found the flexibility of the process confusing and unhelpful. Moreover, in the Belfast case, in spite of the apparent constraint imposed by

the detailed guidance and associated procedures, views in favour of ‘robust’ and ‘rigorous’ (albeit also ‘neutral’) guidance and procedures were presented in approximately equal measure to views in favour of a more flexible approach. Artists in the Belfast case also considered that the selection process, while top-heavy in terms of procedures, was fair, though they questioned the composition of the Arts Advisory Panel in terms of its reflection of local community interests, and in terms of the needs of young people who were not included by virtue of the emphasis on fairness in relation to race, religion and disability (Laganside Corporation, 2002). This suggests that firm and detailed frameworks and procedures for the production of public art in cultural quarters are desirable in terms of facilitating the involvement of artists, though an adverse effect in the Manchester case does not seem to have been evident, with both the cases showing evidence of appreciation by local communities. This provides some support for suggestions in the literature for the need for commissioning guidance and briefs that set clear parameters in terms of vision, aims, time and budget. It also supports the suggestions of Wansborough and Mageean (2000) for the use of more explicit design frameworks and strategies in conjunction with public art in cultural quarters, with such guidance potentially forming part of, or linking to, broader strategies for public art provision. In addition, there is the implication of the need for a more critical approach to consultation to ensure the application of transparent and easily-understood processes.

The issue of the nature of design frameworks, strategies and briefs used to provide the frame and parameters for public art provision, however, raises broader questions, namely: who should write the brief, what should be the interpretation of the public interest, and what should be the goals with respect to specific art works? Essentially, notwithstanding the degree of flexibility conferred within the framework, strategy or brief, the institutional sponsor must be assumed to control the process of construction of the guidance as well as its ultimate form and content. Such a sponsor will also define the public interest with respect to public art provision, and in most cases the sponsor – as a democratically accountable organisation – will have a clear and legitimate role in this respect. Nevertheless, as indicated above, there may be tensions as to the priority to be given to reflection of local identity as opposed to generation of external image, and this may be influenced by the nature of the sponsor and its terms of reference, as well as the local context. Linked to this, there may be significantly differing priorities with respect to the involvement and inclusion of local stakeholders, including residents and artists, in setting the parameters for public art provision. In terms of goals for specific



art works, there would seem, as highlighted in the Manchester case, to be significant scope for involving artists within the process of brief construction and formulation of goals for specific pieces, albeit within the context of a strategic framework or project plan defined by institutional sponsor, to ensure the delivery of broad outcomes in relation to regeneration.

## **Conclusions**

‘Culture-led’ approaches to regeneration, and the associated application of mechanisms such as cultural quarters, are now ubiquitous within the UK, and have become embedded within the orthodoxy of regeneration policy and practice. However, many aspects of such approaches and mechanisms remain disputed. The case of public art provision in cultural quarters, and its linkage with local notions of identity, is particularly problematic since it involves apparent conflicting aims such as reflection of local identity versus enhancement of image as part of place promotion. Such public art provision also involves apparent conflicting assumptions of good practice such as the use of flexible and responsive processes versus the provision of detailed frameworks and guidance. It also raises questions of the extent to which public art can contribute to wider aims for culture-led regeneration.

The cases of public art provision in Manchester’s Northern Quarter and Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter highlight these issues, and shed light directly on the research questions set out above. In terms of the extent to which the aim of public art in cultural quarters is to promote image externally (outside the city), or to reflect image internally (within the city) or both, the cases indicate that both objectives may indeed be sought, with no clear dominance of one or other objective in either case. In terms of the extent to which such (potentially contradictory) aims can be integrated, the cases indicate that public art can indeed integrate the objectives of place promotion and reflecting local identity, although they show that the balance between each is a function of different priorities and circumstances. In terms of what this indicates for ‘best practice’ in the application of ‘culture-led’ regeneration, the cases suggest that public art can indeed contribute significantly to ‘culture-led’ regeneration in terms of the creation of a distinctive environment in cultural quarters that allows and encourages a creative milieu as well as development and investment, and that improves social cohesion and enhances quality of life for local people. More specifically, they show that the use of historical

associations can provide a valuable means of linking public art with local identity. In addition, however, they suggest that the effects of such approaches and mechanisms are sometimes counter-intuitive, with the implications of the need for more widespread incorporation of detailed guidance and contextual design strategies, as requested by artists themselves, and a more critical application of mechanisms to involve local communities. There are clear implications here for policy and practice in other contexts.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this Chapter is to review the methodology used in the research reported in the published papers. I look critically at the justification for this methodology, particularly in terms of the application of the case study approach. It is asserted that this approach can help to explain how cultural quarters are understood by their participants; how they achieve (or do not achieve) clear outcomes; and the effects of the (argued) lack of a clear underpinning theoretical or conceptual framework. The Chapter locates this within a broader spectrum of approaches to the investigation of cultural clustering and culture-led regeneration. In so doing, it demonstrates the originality of my approach, and its significant contribution to theory in relation to the subject area. This Chapter provides evidence and argument for the completion of objective three of the thesis.

#### **2.2 The Nature of the Research: the case study approach**

The four papers (and the research on which they were based) set out earlier in this thesis apply a qualitative approach by means of a review of the literature (secondary data collection and analysis) and the application of case studies (primary data collection and analysis). The case study approach, as set out by Yin (2003a; 2003b), is used for several reasons. First, with respect to cultural clusters and quarters as mechanisms of spatial planning policy, the notion of context (in terms of the physical, social and economic aspects of the cities and quarters concerned) and phenomenon (the policies applied in such quarters) are closely intertwined, and the context contains important explanatory variables in relation to the phenomenon. For instance, it may be argued that the scale of the city context, as well as the scale of the specific cultural cluster or quarter, provides a critical variable that can help to explain the success of policy in bringing about regeneration outcomes. This is essentially because it may be argued that only relatively large cities can sustain the level of cultural activity needed to give rise to a sustainable cultural cluster or quarter, and only a cluster or quarter of above a certain size can sustain the ‘critical mass’ of activity in terms of cultural uses needed to bring about synergistic benefits. In addition, it may be argued that the potential value of

cultural quarters derives in part from their embeddedness in, and linkage to, the circumstances of local history and identity (as argued in papers two and three).

The use of case studies in such circumstances allows both context and phenomenon to be considered as part of the explanation of why policies for cultural clustering have achieved the outcomes that they have (and why they have failed to achieve some stated outcomes). This may be considered as an ‘intensive’ approach, since it looks in detail at a particular phenomenon and its situation, and the relationship between the two. It may therefore be contrasted with an ‘extensive’ approach, which looks in less detail at a larger number of units of study, with limited contextual information. Within such an ‘extensive’ approach, for instance as applied by means of a large-scale questionnaire survey, it would be necessary to an extent to de-contextualise the notion of cultural quarters, with the potential loss of vital understanding of the way in which specificities of context have shaped the experience of such quarters, including the achievement of regeneration outcomes. Arguably, therefore, extensive approaches may be useful in establishing correlation between variables, while intensive approaches are more useful in developing an explanation of cause and effect.

In terms of specific methods, case studies can combine a range of methods, but the use of interviews may be argued to be particularly appropriate where it is critical to understand the views and interpretations of key actors or participants. This applies in the context of policy for cultural clustering and cultural quarters since there is a relatively small number of relevant key policy-makers within each locality, and it is necessary to capture the complexity of their interpretation of the interlinked social, economic and environmental dimensions in relation to such policy, particularly in terms of how it may achieve (potential) regeneration outcomes and how far existing outcomes may be ascribed to such policy. This implies the need to encompass detailed experience for which interpretation and explanation is required, particularly taking into account the potential influence of context and the need to distinguish this influence from that of the phenomenon itself (the policy intervention). As indicated above, cases of cultural clusters and quarters involve close linkage of context and phenomenon, and a decontextualised approach would therefore be less appropriate for explaining how and why policy achieves (or fails to achieve) its aims and anticipated outcomes.



In relation to the papers contained in this thesis, the case study approach makes appropriate use of interview-based research. Specifically, for paper one, (Wolverhampton) the research included interviews with two local planning officers, an arts administrator and a town centre manager. For papers two and three, the research included interviews with a local authority planning officer, an economic development officer and an arts administrator (Dundee); and a local authority planning officer and two arts administrators (Glasgow). For paper four, the research included interviews with a local authority planning officer and a development corporation planning officer (Belfast) and a local authority planning officer (Manchester). This range of actors is appropriate since the nature of the relevant issues relate to the development and application of local authority policy for cultural quarters.

### **2.3 Physical – Social Science Paradigms**

In order to explain the value of the case study approach, it is useful to set it more clearly in the broader context of scientific philosophy. Flyvbjerg (2001), amongst others, explains how the natural science model of enquiry has proved inadequate in much of its application to the social sciences, with differing meanings of ‘theory’ in each context (with for instance the natural science model being based upon a predictive approach which is less easily applied in the social sciences). He suggests that ‘the study of social phenomena is not, never has been, and probably never can be, scientific in the conventional meaning of the word “science”’ (p. 25). He shows how the natural science paradigm has clear benefits particularly in terms of its logical simplicity and ability to bring about the cumulative application of knowledge by means of explanation and prediction based upon context-independent theories. However, he also points to recent developments for instance in terms of chaos and complexity theories which indicate problems with the idealised natural science model, and he suggests that the predictive nature of the natural science model, based upon ‘context-independent elements which can be abstracted from the everyday world’ (p. 39) is inappropriate for much of the social sciences. He asserts that matters of context should have a more central position with social science, which leads him to stress the potential for the case study approach, not as a secondary or preliminary adjunct to extensive hypothesis-testing (as part of the hypothetico-deductive scientific model), but as a central explanatory method in itself. Overall, he concludes that ‘Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the

study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is therefore more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals' (p. 73).

Flyvbjerg argues that the case study is valuable since it is close to real-life situations in terms of consideration of a 'multiple wealth of details' enabling a 'nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process' (p. 72). He adds that predictive theory probably cannot exist in social science since 'social science has in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge, and the case study is especially well suited to produce this' (p. 72).

Flyvbjerg shows that the criticism that case studies have an inherent bias towards verification in terms of a tendency to confirm the preconceived notions of the researcher is not accurate. This is because many case studies show instead a bias towards falsification of preconceived notions for instance by the choice of a critical case which is least likely to verify the proposition. In any event, he shows that 'arbitrary subjectivism' is a more general problem which applies to all research; it may therefore equally apply to the choice of categories and variables for a quantitative investigation. Furthermore, in terms of the criticism that case studies are difficult to summarise in general propositions, he points out that the use of rich or 'thick' case study narratives can relay valuable detail which assists the understanding of nuances of difference which impact on cause and effect. Such an approach would seem to be particularly valuable for the explanation of policy intervention in terms of social, economic and environmental outcomes. Hence it is the very detail and complexity of such studies that is of value, so that generalised or summarised case studies may be seen as inherently less valuable than those that retain the rich detail of the case. He adds that this need not imply that the knowledge involved in such cases cannot be cumulative, since it can be used in the testing of broader propositions or theories.

Flyvbjerg counters a frequently asserted criticism of the case study approach, namely that it does not allow generalisation, by pointing out that this depends in part on the specific case study, and how it is chosen. Hence the strategic choice (or sampling) of case studies can greatly add to their generalisability. Specifically, Flyvbjerg argues that the generalisability of cases is strengthened where 'critical cases' are used to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given phenomenon or problem, for

which random sampling may not be the most appropriate strategy. Instead, ‘Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied. In addition ... it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur. Random samples emphasising representativeness will seldom be able to produce this kind of insight; it is more appropriate to select a few cases chosen for their validity’ (p. 78).

Flyvbjerg suggests that ‘extreme’ cases can provide evidence of key issues of broader relevance, while ‘critical’ cases can assist in confirming or falsifying propositions. In addition, he suggests that ‘maximum variation’ cases can provide evidence of the significance of context for case outcomes, for instance where several cases are chosen because they are clearly different on one dimension such as scale. He adds, however, that such selection strategies need not be mutually exclusive, so that one case can cover more than one category (for instance in being simultaneously extreme and critical) and such cases may be seen as particularly valuable in the information they can offer. Consequently, while he acknowledges that formal generalisation can play a valuable role in theory development in the social sciences, for instance via the use of extensive surveys based on random samples, he highlights that this should not be seen as the only legitimate means of scientific enquiry. Furthermore, he argues that case studies can assist in the development of hypotheses, and in the testing of theories by means of falsification. He concludes that generalisation can result even from a single case, and the case study method can therefore assist scientific development.

In terms of the research on which the papers in this thesis are based, it can be demonstrated that the choice of case studies demonstrates the application of such critical cases. Hence the case of Wolverhampton (in paper one) may be considered as an extreme case in three respects; first, in that the Cultural Quarter here was combined with a further “Artists’ Quarter” embedded within it; second, in that the Cultural Quarter was adapted from a previously-designated ‘Leisure and Entertainment Quarter’ (again, the only such case in the UK); and third, in that the scale of the Cultural Quarter was relatively small. Similarly, the cases of Glasgow and Dundee in paper two represent maximum variation cases (in which the critical issue of scale was the key dimension on which difference was demonstrated, with Glasgow representing a relatively large-scale case and Dundee representing [like Wolverhampton] a relatively small-scale case). In

paper three, the case of Dundee also represents an extreme case (where the linkage with identity was low) while in paper four the cases of Belfast and Manchester represent maximum variation cases (where the critical issue of approach to the aims for, and shaping of, policy for public art were the key dimensions in which difference was demonstrated). In addition, the case of Belfast may be seen as an extreme case where the history of social division had provided an extreme case of divided identities.

Flyvbjerg argues that the use of case studies is currently undervalued and disadvantaged as a consequence of the mismatch between the value of such studies and the common bias against such approaches within conventional social science, within which the discipline of spatial planning (and the subject of policy for cultural clustering) is situated. In this context, the case study approach as demonstrated in the four papers represents a valuable and original contribution to the literature in relation to the application of cultural quarters.

The contribution of the papers within this thesis is particularly important in view of the lack of research and evidence in relation to cultural quarters and cultural clustering at the local or site-specific level. At the broader, aspatial level, there is a significant body of evidence and research with respect to broader cultural or regeneration policy, for instance in terms of the economic benefits of cultural activities and creative industries. As argued elsewhere in this thesis, this is related to the importance of such policy to (central) government in terms of spending, for instance via subsidy of cultural activities and grant aid via Lottery funding, as well as the recognition of the economic value of the arts and cultural sectors to the national economy. However, at the local or site-specific level, there is much less demonstration of research and evidence in relation to culture-led regeneration as applied by policy for cultural clustering for instance in terms of cultural quarters. The lack of such research and evidence is of particular concern in view of the widespread application of local spatial planning policy for cultural quarters (for instance by the designation of cultural quarters in statutory development plans). Consequently, such policy lacks a clear evidence base, which hampers its capacity to achieve its aims. This has cost implications since, while such policy may not directly involve public expenditure, it nevertheless incurs 'opportunity costs' in terms of those uses that are discouraged or precluded (assuming of course that the development plan is effective in shaping land uses). Moreover, as argued in the papers, such policy may

lead to much more substantial costs in the longer term, if there are counter-productive effects for instance in terms of loss of distinctiveness for the areas and cities concerned.

In addition, much of the relevant research that does exist (with notable exceptions) reflects assumptions that are not explicitly tested, in terms of the value of the spatial concentration of cultural activity. Thus it is frequently stated in such research that cultural clustering is necessarily desirable in the context of broadly-based aims for culture-led regeneration (see for instance Roodhouse, 2006). However, as demonstrated by papers one to three, such assumptions are subject to contrary arguments for the (social) benefits of dispersal of cultural uses. Hence the papers within this thesis represent a significant and original contribution to the literature and field in terms of both the discovery of new facts and the exercise of independent critical power.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

This Chapter has critically considered the approach and methods used in the research that is reported in papers one to four. It has examined the justification for the broad approach adopted, arguing for the appropriateness of the case study method. This, it is asserted, can enable understanding of how cultural quarters are interpreted, the extent to which they achieve their aims (and the reasons for this), and the extent to which they are underpinned by clear theoretical or conceptual frameworks. In considering the context of previous research, the Chapter has demonstrated the originality of my approach, and its contribution to theory in relation to the subject area. The final Chapter, which follows, goes on to comment on the contribution made by the four papers and the foregoing discussion to the broader field of spatial planning. It also summarises the implications of the research for good practice.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE RESEARCH AND ITS CONTRIBUTION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this Chapter is to show how my work, as set out in papers one to four, contributes to the expansion of knowledge in the discipline of spatial planning, and to demonstrate the originality of my contribution. I make this assessment based upon three separate but interlinked questions, as follows. First, in what way is the evidence that I have collected new? Second, how does my research contribute to the development of the discipline of spatial planning? Third, how does my research show independent critical power? In answering these questions, I regard papers one to four as a coherent body of work (as argued in section 1.3.3 of Chapter One). After reviewing the answers to these questions, this Chapter concludes with a summary of the implications of my research for good practice.

#### **3.2 Mapping the Literature**

The starting point for this discussion is my assessment of the literature relevant to the research as demonstrated in the papers, including literature developed since the research was conducted and papers one to four were published. Each of papers one to four contains a review of previous literature and each paper reflects on the contribution that it makes to the literature. However, it is useful now to draw together how my research as shown in the papers is located within the current spectrum of literature in the field. This is done below by separating several (interlinked) themes or aspects of concern which are drawn out in the papers. These are set out below.

##### *3.2.1 Conceptual underpinning of policy*

The issue of the (lack of) conceptual underpinning of policy for cultural clustering is one which runs through all the four papers set out in this thesis, and in particular in papers one to three. This issue is linked to the current popularity of such policy application within spatial planning. Miles and Paddison (2005) highlight some of the reasons for the contemporary attention paid to culture-led regeneration in terms of

policy application. In particular they refer to the relevance of a Downsian issue-attention cycle with initial enthusiasm leading to widespread adoption and expectation, but followed by an increasing awareness of limitations. It may be argued that the recent widespread adoption of cultural clustering policy illustrates the initial phase of such a cycle, but with increasing evidence of a shortfall between expectation and reality, as indicated by Evans (2005). Consequently, increasing (though arguably still insufficient) attention is being paid to cultural clustering within the wider spatial planning literature, including for instance mainstream regeneration texts. This is shown for instance by Jones and Evans' (2008) regeneration textbook, which highlights the use of cultural quarters as a regeneration mechanism, and cites paper two of this thesis.

In terms of the theoretical context for cultural clustering, Evans (2005) highlights the importance of the growing literature in relation to place-marketing and branding, but suggests that the perceived value of such branding may be misplaced in view of risks such as brand decay, gentrification and formulaic outcomes, as also reflected by Miles M (2005). This lack of theoretical underpinning for policy is highlighted also by Porter and Barber (2007), who indicate that the lessons of previous practice were not been applied systematically in the case of Birmingham, resulting in a lack of understanding of what a cultural quarter can actually achieve. This endorses the view that there is limited learning from evidence (which is itself minimal) with respect to cultural quarters, in spite of their widespread application (as reflected in papers one and two).

In this context, Roodhouse (2006) presents an account of the principles and practices involved in considering, developing and establishing cultural quarters. This is one of the few examples of works which focus exclusively on the spatial planning policy-related aspects of culture-led regeneration. However, this work paradoxically may be argued to further illustrate the lack of underlying theory in relation to cultural clustering since the accounts of cultural quarters here are largely descriptive, with limited critical content which focuses mainly on the dangers of 'top-down' approaches, and the internal contradictions inherent in much relevant policy (as set out in papers one and two) are largely unconsidered. This illustrates a broader lack of use of evidence from previous practice within cultural clustering policy, which is developed further below.

### 3.2.2 *Evidence-based policy?*

The above arguments in terms of conceptual underpinning are clearly linked to a perceived failure of evidence-based (or -informed) approaches to policy, and there would seem to be a gap in this respect between expectation and reality, or theory and practice, within cultural clustering policy. The evaluation of previous policy is critical in this respect, and Evans (2005) summarises the problems inherent in the measurement and evaluation of evidence with respect to the contribution of culture to regeneration outcomes, arguing that the effects of culture-led regeneration are often assumed without justification. He highlights long-standing concerns with the (over-)ambition of culture-led regeneration, particularly for small cities, for which he suggests the potential outcomes of culture-led approaches may have been exaggerated. Such policy approaches, he suggests, have not addressed the contemporary emphasis on evidence-based (or -informed) policy, and he stresses the need for further research on culture-led regeneration programmes, especially in terms of quantitative data and longitudinal studies. Moreover, he indicates that academic accounts of culture-led regeneration have often been ‘either descriptive and uncritical case studies, or highly critical (but lacking in robust empirical evidence), displaying a “culture of pessimism”’ (Evan, 2005, p. 965). Nevertheless, he acknowledges that detailed case studies can assist in explaining the complex role of local politics and power structures within spatial planning practice. This supports the assertions set out in Chapter Two in terms of the validity of the case study approach for the investigation of cultural clustering policy and its effects.

In terms of an explanation of the adoption of cultural clustering policy in the absence of a clear evidence base, Evans (2005) highlights the element of agency within the process of policy transfer, with the predominant influence in this respect of ‘a small number of ubiquitous arts consultants featuring in creative strategy initiatives world-wide’ (p. 972). This brings the risk of inappropriate transfer of initiatives and approaches between widely-varying contexts, and Evans suggests that ‘There is now evidence that cultural strategies developed by external “catalysts” have actually reinforced spatial divides and social exclusion particularly amongst cultural minority and social groups’ (p. 972), since expected community facilities and benefits often could not be delivered. Hence such generic strategies are at risk of raising expectations unnecessarily as a result of over-ambitiousness and untested assumptions, linked to the lack of an adequate evidence base.



Overall, Evans highlights the dominance of boosterist regeneration strategies which emphasise iconic, flagship projects, which is at odds with the ‘evidence of the superior and sustained benefits of participatory arts activity compared with passive cultural consumption (a feature of most culture-led regeneration schemes)’ (p. 977). This is linked to the contested basis for cultural clustering (as argued in papers one and two). As these papers show, there are clear economic benefits to be derived from the clustering of cultural production uses, arising from the benefits of agglomeration which include the potential for face-to-face interaction and cross-fertilisation of expertise and innovatory or exemplary practice. There are also arguments for synergies with cultural consumption uses, for instance between artists’ workspaces and art galleries, which in turn may have synergies with uses such as bars and restaurants. However, it may equally be proposed (as set out in these papers) that somewhat different arguments apply in the context of the social benefits related to cultural uses. Specifically, participatory cultural activity (which is desirable in terms of social and educational outcomes) implies a degree of dispersal across space to ensure accessibility for, and embedding in, local neighbourhoods and communities, including (perhaps particularly) those which suffer from relative disadvantage. Clearly, it is such communities which are often the focus of regeneration strategies with a social dimension. Conversely, schemes based on notions of cultural clustering, usually within town and city centres, tend to involve passive cultural consumption, and they often lack a social regeneration focus and potential benefits for disadvantaged communities.

Hence a degree of dispersal of cultural activities and uses may be argued to be more effective as a basis for achievement of social aims for culture-led regeneration than concentration of cultural activities. Of course, there are clear limits to the degree to which such dispersal can be effective in social terms, without damaging the potential for economic benefits of agglomeration. Nevertheless, current policy assumptions demonstrably follow an (un-theorised) approach based on the desirability of clustering of cultural uses of all kinds. Thus a central argument in the papers is for an evidence-based approach to addressing these contested issues, making use of clear case study-based evidence in relation to the benefits, problems and inadequacies of an approach which overwhelmingly prioritises cultural clustering in the context of broadly-based regeneration.

In terms of a way forward in this respect, Evans suggests the more rigorous use of indicators to identify the benefits of cultural clusters and related policy, albeit without imposing standardised performance indicators or quantitative benchmarks, since contexts and circumstances vary so widely. Such indicators, he suggests, should include design-based aspects such as integration of uses, as well as other aspects such as ‘identity/civic pride; place vitality; inclusiveness; connectivity; safety; and facilities and amenities’ (p. 975).

Garcia (2005) reflects Evans’ (2005) emphasis on the need for greater use of indicators to evaluate culture-led regeneration policy. Specifically, she shows how methods to assess the impacts of regeneration are ‘severely underdeveloped’ (p. 846), and concludes that it is the ‘softer, less tangible cultural benefits’ (p. 861) of such approaches that have often been sustained, as opposed to more widely perceived benefits such as job creation. She notes nevertheless that, as with economic impacts, there is a problem of disentangling cause and effect in view of the complex nature of intangible cultural benefits. These issues would seem to be linked to the main driver of policy development in relation to cultural clustering policy (as set out in the next section) namely policy transfer by serial replication. Hence, rather than cultural clustering policy being based upon evaluation of previous policy and its outcomes (taking into account the importance of context-specific factors, and disentangling cause and effect), it is instead based simply upon policy transfer or replication.

### *3.2.3 Policy transfer by serial replication*

Papers one and two consider how policy transfer by serial replication may partly explain the way in which cultural clustering is applied in practice. In this context, Miles M (2005), like Evans (2005) and Miles S (2005), questions the extent to which strategies and policies that have been applied in one context can effectively be transferred to another context where conditions may differ substantially. This, Miles M suggests, is linked to the simplistic instrumentalism applied by policy-makers who fail to acknowledge that small contextual differences may have significant effects on outcomes, as shown for instance by the formulaic or generic approach frequently applied in cultural industries quarters. Moreover, Porter and Barber (2007) show how in the case of Eastside in Birmingham there was little linkage between the policy

applied and the specific context, other than in terms of bland statements concerning for instance the need to build upon the distinctive urban fabric.

In addition, Evans (2005) highlights how the use of outside agents such as ‘masterplanners, star architects and cultural intermediaries’ (p. 970) to create a sense of place leads frequently to a lack of involvement of local interests. Consequently, one way to encourage reflection of local context, Miles M suggests, is by the involvement of local communities so as to enable local diversity to shape policy and outcomes, as also suggested by Julier (2005) and Garcia (2005). Paper three substantially adds to the evidence base in relation to such issues by showing in detail how processes for policy replication work in practice. In so doing, it also provides linkages to the issue of local identity considered in 3.2.4 below.

#### *3.2.4 Clarity of aims, scope and form of policy*

In terms of the *aims* of cultural clustering policy, there is a degree of contestation over the appropriate scope of policy aims – for instance whether such aims should be primarily social (perhaps involving a redistributive or educational element) or economic (perhaps involving generation of income and/or employment). This question is linked to what Sharp *et al* (2004) call ‘the overprivileging of cultural justice at the expense of socioeconomic redistribution’ (p. 1021). Sharp *et al* imply that policy aims in this context tend to prioritise the need for provision of cultural facilities and uses, rather than the need to focus benefits and outcomes on those groups in greatest need (however defined).

Furthermore, Minton (2003) advises against an over-emphasis on economic outcomes: ‘If...they [creative projects] are intended as little more than a tourist magnet, they will come to be seen as white elephants, and will ultimately undermine creativity and change’ (p. 23). Minton therefore implies that cultural clustering policy aims should not overly prioritise income generation (from tourism) at the expense of broader social aims. Porter and Barber (2007) also argue for the need for a greater emphasis on social as opposed to economic aims with respect to cultural clustering, with the case of Birmingham’s Eastside illustrating a contrary emphasis on economic diversification. Nevertheless, Evans (2005) indicates the potential for culture-led regeneration to

contribute to aims for social cohesion as well as economic competitiveness, noting a recent emphasis on the need for social impacts. In terms of the unresolved issue of whether cultural quarters should aim at production, consumption, or both, Porter and Barber (2007) argue that the most successful quarters achieve an element of both, and that there is a need for provision of a range of types of quarter for the encouragement of cultural uses. The papers forming part of this thesis add substantially to the evidence base in relation to such issues. In particular, papers one and two (using the examples of Wolverhampton, Glasgow and Dundee) illustrate the need for clarity on the aims of cultural clustering. They show how this is related to the lack of an evidence base in relation to cultural clustering since this means that the potential of such policy to achieve social or economic outcomes is currently unclear. They go on to highlight the inadequacy of generic aims (and approaches) in relation to cultural clustering, arguing instead for a differentiated approach which shows how such potential is in large part contingent on context. The case study approach is particularly valid here since it can show the importance of context in applying policy for cultural clustering. Overall, therefore, these papers not only add to the available evidence base but also provide a valuable critique of the detail of current policy approaches, which is largely absent from the available literature.

With respect to the *scope* of culture-led regeneration policy, Minton (2003) suggests the need for flexibility and a broadening of the notion of culture-led regeneration: 'To ensure a sustainable quality of place, urban planners need to generate longer, slower-paced cycles of change that can be continually refreshed and renewed' (p. 7). In addition, she argues that culture-led regeneration policy should apply more broadly than through creative clusters or quarters and iconic flagship developments, so that cities can develop a broader and more sustainable economic base rather than remaining reliant on 'a growing but relatively small and largely imported "creative class"' (p. 43).

In relation to the *form* of policy, Porter and Barber (2007) suggest that an organic, 'hands-off' approach may prove more successful for cultural quarters, as in the case for instance of Manchester's Northern Quarter. In addition, Minton (2003) uses the example of Gateshead to illustrate good practice in terms of an 'organic, flexible' (p. 25) approach to development which exploits 'creative serendipity' (p. 25). In relation to the form of policy in terms of the components it includes, Porter and Barber (2007) highlight the confusion in official documentation for instance in terms of the notions of

a '24 hour district' and 'urban village'. This, they suggest, indicates a lack of 'critical imaginative thinking about what a cultural quarter might be, and what planning or other spatial policy initiatives and tools might be necessary to facilitate this' (p. 1344). Paper two of this thesis contributes substantially to these arguments by focusing on the need for greater clarity in the analysis of types of policy approaches, for instance in terms of distinguishing 'formal' and 'informal' approaches. This distinction is critical in the context of the spatial application of cultural policy, since only 'formal' approaches have the backing of development plans with respect to site-specific policy. Such a distinction, however, is not made in other literature in relation to cultural clustering, thus confirming the originality of the notions within the paper. Moreover, Porter and Barber suggest that the informal or 'hands-off' approach has perhaps been too extreme in the case of Birmingham's Eastside, and that more emphasis on limited but targeted intervention, focusing on innovative small-scale initiatives, might be more likely to encourage sustainable growth.

With relevance to the nature and form of policy, Evans (2005) provides a distinction between three models of the use of culture in regeneration, as follows. First, 'culture-led regeneration' is applied where 'cultural activity is seen as the catalyst and engine of regeneration' (p. 968). Second, 'cultural regeneration' is applied where 'cultural activity is more integrated into an area strategy alongside other activities in the environmental, social and economic sphere' (p. 968). Third, 'culture and regeneration' describes the approach where 'cultural activity is not fully integrated at the strategic development or master planning stage' (p. 970), as seen for instance in small scale schemes or those where cultural elements are 'retro-fitted' with little consideration for the importance of local identity. In this context, papers one and two extend the consideration of different models of the use of culture in regeneration, by showing how such models are applied spatially in terms of defined areas. Specifically, paper one (using the example of Wolverhampton) shows how cultural clustering policy is linked to broader approaches involving the 'quartering' of cities. This paper also highlights how such approaches are linked to notions of city marketing and branding. Paper two further extends the consideration of models of culture and regeneration by testing the extent to which such models are applied at different scales (using the cases of Dundee and Glasgow). It concludes that there are different conceptual frameworks or models evident in both contexts, again related to the lack of theoretical underpinning of the

notion of cultural clustering. This provides further endorsement of the value and originality of the papers within this thesis.

### *3.2.5 Issues of identity, distinctiveness and use of public art*

As indicated above (and also in papers three and four), many of the main issues of concern considered in the papers (and in this thesis), with respect to cultural clustering policy, are related to issues of local identity. As set out above, this arises from such factors as the prevalence of serial replication in terms of the transfer of such policy, with local identity (which is arguably desirable and essential to maximise policy outcomes) often being eroded as a result. In this context, Miles S (2005) and Evans (2005) show how cultural clustering policy often fails to acknowledge local identity, partly as a result of the application of generic approaches and iconic cultural projects, with a lack of engagement with local communities. Consequently, Miles S suggests that much culture-led regeneration activity produces ‘placeless forms of cultural representation’ (p. 915) since ‘culture-led regeneration projects all too often rely on formulaic development plans producing standardised results’ (p. 916). He shows how the development of identity is dynamic and processual, being a function of long-term adaptability over time, which highlights the complexity of incorporating notions of local identity within culture-led regeneration policy. This also suggests the need for sensitivity to the way that history has shaped local identities. Indeed, Evans (2005) suggests that such a sensitivity is incompatible with the frequent ‘preference for the “new” (arising for instance from new physical ‘flagship’ projects and public art) over the “old”’ (p. 970), as well as for the ‘visible over informal and community-based culture’ (p. 977). These arguments clearly link with the suggestions in papers two and three that culture-led regeneration visions or strategies tend to underestimate the need for linkage with the complex, diverse and changing meanings and identities inherent within localities.

The issue of distinctiveness is linked to that of identity, and Lee (2007) suggests that a process of homogenisation is taking place in many towns and cities, for instance with the development of similar chain shops and restaurants. He indicates that this may be the result of economic development strategies which lack linkage to context – a process of replication that reflects the serial replication process with respect to cultural quarters as set out in papers one to three. Hence, he suggests, cities have more recently sought to develop ‘differentiation strategies’ by making use of their unique assets, specialisms

and character, and the built environment can form an important part of such strategies, for instance by use of iconic structures or public art. Lee also indicates that creative industries can provide an important means of distinguishing cities from one another by promoting quality of life for instance. He argues that image enhancement and branding can also be used in this respect, but cautions that linkage to local identity is critical in all respects for differentiation strategies, since otherwise they are likely to fail. In this context, papers three and four significantly extend the debate by using appropriate case studies. Hence paper three uses the example of Dundee to show how priority for cultural clustering policy was given to external image enhancement rather than local identity, with the implication of a lost opportunity. Paper four shows how public art within cultural quarters can effectively highlight local identity, with clear social benefits. Thus again these papers can be seen to apply originality in the consideration of the application of cultural clustering policy, with clear implications for more effective policy and practice.

The issue of place branding in the context of local identity is highlighted by Julier (2005), who reflects Evans' (2003) consideration of 'hard' and 'soft' branding, with the former leading to the risk of homogeneity in the context of cultural quarters. Julier shows how Manchester's Northern Quarter illustrates the use of a 'programmatically defined identity' within a broader marketing strategy formulated by an 'elite consensus' (p. 883). In addition, he confirms the need for linkage of identity and history: 'The recognition that ... any development of place-identity is one of nurturing pre-existing information resonates with the possibility that this is a process of appropriation and reappropriation rather than invention' (p. 885). Porter and Barber (2007) also indicate the need for concern for linkage to local identity and history, so as to achieve aims for social cohesion and civic pride. However, Julier indicates that place marketing in practice prioritises modernity, avant-gardism and 'up-to-the-minuteness' and 'the rapid appropriation of creative activities' as part of a wider articulation of urban vibrancy, as also reflected by Miles (2005) and Sharp, Pollock and Paddison (2005). In terms of the papers within this thesis, paper four in particular shows originality in its consideration of this issue, by means of its focus on how public art has the capacity to achieve outcomes in relation to both external image and local identity.

The issue of identity is also linked to an increasing problem of lack of authenticity with respect to urban marketing, as well as cultural planning. In this context, Young (2008)

refers to a broader trend of ‘culturisation’, as ‘a pattern that combines the growth of commodification in the cultural economy with the increasing culturisation of economic and organisational life’ (p. 5). He points to the way that culture is subtle, complex, fluid and abstract, and adds that ‘there is a lack of understanding of suitable techniques and approaches for accessing and incorporating detailed and qualitative cultural knowledge in planning’ (p. 5). The discussion within papers one to four extends these arguments by pointing specifically to the need for more context-sensitive mechanisms for culture-led regeneration, underpinned by research and analysis of evidence.

In terms of specific mechanisms, the use of public art within cultural quarters may be seen as an important means of achieving linkage with local identity, and Sharp, Pollock and Paddison (2005) show how public art, where sensitive to local identity, can achieve aims for instance for social inclusion. They suggest that public art can ‘create a sense of inclusion’ (p. 1003) by means of a feeling of ownership of space, linked to civic pride. However, they also show that such art can prove counter-productive in terms of social exclusion, where it fails to reflect local identity, perhaps because of an emphasis on new and novel elements (linked to the arguments above). This implies the need for local communities to be involved in the process of creating public art, though the use of ‘elitist language’ (Sharp *et al*, p. 1016) can make this difficult, and there may be problems with the role of the artist as ‘creative facilitator’. Sharp *et al* also show that such inclusion is more difficult on a city-wide basis, though this is increasingly the level at which public art is used for city re-branding, and they acknowledge that such re-branding implies an imposed or controlled image which may conflict with the reflection of local identity. Furthermore, they argue that an ‘authoritarian populism’, whereby consensus is manufactured, may lead to a ‘myth of harmony’ (p. 1004) amongst multiple (and changing) identities. Nevertheless, they conclude that ‘properly managed processes [of public involvement in public art creation] can help to maximise a sense of ownership and even empowerment’ (p. 1017). Moreover, while Miles (2005) suggests that small-scale initiatives such as public art may be prioritised because they are relatively inexpensive, Landry and Bianchini (1995) suggest that even superficial initiatives can have an important effect on civic pride and quality of life, and Evans (2005) points out that it is the small-scale design elements within regeneration schemes that often appear to garner most public support. Again, these issues are explored in detail in paper four, using case study examples which show how public art can make use of historical associations to reconcile aims for both city branding and local identity.



In terms of the linkage of heritage and identity, Graham and Howard (2008) show that these are connected with territory and place, though heritage is often multiple and dynamic. This is reflected in paper four in terms of the use of historical associations in public art. In addition, Atkinson (2008) indicates how historical associations may be used as an economic resource as part of place marketing. However, he highlights how such activity often focuses on the positive, distinctive and heroic, rather than the unpopular, dirty and unsavoury, as a ‘partial and selective vision of the past’ (p. 384). He illustrates this by the development of waterfront areas which often illustrate ‘a surprisingly uniform maritime aesthetic of formulaic motifs that emphasise “historic character” ... These are sanitized docklands, designed to appeal for their sentimental, nostalgic vision of a maritime past rather than representing the multicultural, fluid, edgy, sometimes dangerous places that docklands usually were’ (p. 390). Nevertheless, he shows that in some cases (such as Hull), approaches based upon historical associations can prove popular and valued by the local community. Minton (2003) also argues that history can be used to link with local identity and distinctiveness, which can ensure that regeneration outcomes are sustainable and ‘rooted in a city’s culture and community’ (p. 23). In this context, paper four in particular shows originality in its consideration of related issues since it highlights the use of historical associations within public art as a means of reconciling issues of identity within fractured and polarised communities. This implies that arguments such as those of Atkinson (2008) are rather simplistic in their consideration of the potential of mechanisms such as public art.

### **3.3 Contribution to the Evidence Base**

Within the spectrum of themes and concerns which act as the backdrop for the research, as set out above, I have focused on a specific set of questions, and I have aimed to provide and interpret new evidence. Thus, paper one looks at the notion of cultural quarters as part of broader ‘quartering’ processes within cities, linked to city branding and marketing. Paper two shifts the focus towards the broader context of policy for cultural clustering, examining not only formally-designated cultural quarters but also informally-designated quarters. It can be concluded from these papers that there is a lack of theoretical underpinning with respect to cultural quarters and cultural clustering, and there is a resulting confusion with respect to what might be regarded as good practice. This would seem to be in part the result of serial replication of the mechanism

of cultural quarters within local spatial planning policy, a process which does not adequately take into account the nature of local context. My work as shown in papers one and two has affirmed aspects of the wider literature, as indicated above, for instance in terms of the broad lack of a theory base for culture-led regeneration approaches, particularly in relation to spatial planning. In addition, my work in papers one and two has generated new data and allowed new insights into the reasons why such approaches have been pursued in spite of an evidence base, thus adding significantly to the work of Evans (2005), for example.

Moreover, papers three and four consider the way in which issues of identity are considered within cultural quarters. Specifically, paper three considers how such identity may be reflected in policy for cultural quarters, and shows that, in the case considered, local identity failed to be adequately reflected, with the potential result of loss of distinctiveness in the longer term. Paper four builds on this aspect of identity within cultural clustering policy, focusing on the use of public art, and concludes that such art can contribute best to local regeneration outcomes where it is linked to local identity, with the use of historical associations showing one way in which this can be achieved. As with papers one and two, my work in papers three and four has affirmed some aspects of the wider literature as indicated above, for instance in terms of the potential contradiction between aims for city branding and aims to reflect local identity, with important implications for local distinctiveness (again with particular implications for spatial planning). In addition, in applying locally-grounded case study research, it has generated new data, identifying where there are potential missed opportunities for more effective policy application to maximise regeneration outcomes.

The contribution of these papers leads to the further issue of why the questions I have posed in my papers, and the answers I have provided, are of significance? I would suggest the following in terms of an answer to this question. As the papers (particularly papers one to three) identify, the current application of policy for cultural clustering and cultural quarters is sub-optimal in terms of achievement of stated aims and outcomes, and it may even be argued that it is (in the longer term) potentially counter-productive. Of course such conclusions are in part speculative, but one reason for this is that many cultural quarters are relatively new. Indeed, the notion of cultural clustering as applied by means of spatial planning policy is at a relatively early stage in perhaps most cases. Consequently, longer term impacts have yet to be ascertained. This indicates the

importance of capturing the available experience and evidence so as to inform future policy. Moreover, the importance of the conclusions set out in the papers is further underlined by the current widespread application of spatial planning policy for cultural clustering. The implication is that current policy requires a deeper evidence base so as to allow such policy to maximise outcomes. The evidence I have provided goes some way towards providing such an evidence base, by explaining how and why spatial planning policy in relation to cultural clustering and cultural quarters works in practice, in concrete contexts and circumstances, and how it may fail to achieve intended outcomes in the future. The papers therefore usefully extend the literature for, and understanding of, spatial planning. In addition, they suggest how further research and evidence can assist in this respect.

In terms of the specific contribution of the papers in this respect, some of the more important conclusions in relation to theory, policy development and best practice are set out at the end of this thesis (section 3.6.2).

### **3.4 Contribution to the Development of the Discipline**

In this section, I aim to argue that my work has contributed to the wider discipline of spatial planning. First I point out the broader need for evidence-based policy. Then I argue that there is significant potential for the contribution of case studies which show how spatial planning policy for cultural clustering is applied in particular circumstances, with implications for the explanation of the extent to which intended outcomes are achieved. I argue that there are limited analyses of this kind so that my application of this methodological approach contributes to an advance in understanding within the field. Finally, I argue that the policy relevance of my work has reinforced an important aspect of the spatial planning literature – namely its application to the solution of practical problems.

#### *3.4.1 Evidence-based policy*

In terms of the broader link between theory and practice in public sector policy intervention, the need for ‘evidence-based’ policy has been articulated in many contexts in recent years (Boaz, Grayson, Levitt and Solesbury, 2008; Solesbury, 2001). This has

led to renewed interest in public policy evaluation, including in the context of regeneration, to ensure that outcomes are maximised (Boaz *et al*, 2008). However, as argued in the papers, such outcomes do not appear to be maximised in practice with the potential even for counter-productive effects.

This approach of evidence-based policy would seem to have been applied to an extent in the context of culture-led regeneration, particularly where there is a need to justify the use of public subsidy, for instance in terms of large-scale ‘flagship’ regeneration projects. However, this approach does not seem to have been applied to the same extent in spatial planning policy (including in the designation of cultural quarters within development plans as a means of encouraging cultural clustering and thereby bringing about broader regeneration outcomes), as indicated within the papers. This begs the question: why has this been the case? There are two suggested possible answers to this question, as follows.

First, it may be argued that the lack of an evidence-based approach in this context is part of the broader (and long-standing) attachment of much spatial planning (as defined on page three) policy and practice to fashionable concepts and notions which are not necessarily grounded in evidence and theory (see for instance Reade, 1987). This may be linked, as Reade suggests, to a lack of clarity in the aims of spatial planning (including who is to benefit from such activity) with the result that planning activity may be seen to lead in practice to the widening of social divisions. Hence such activity may be counter-productive in terms of the ascribed aims of spatial planning, which seeks to ‘sustain the environment, and to develop economic and social well-being’ (RTPI, 2001, p. 2). This is linked to the broader issue of the need (as part of the public policy development process) for use of evidence/theory arising from the evaluation of other initiatives, for instance by ‘ex post evaluation’ (the backward-looking assessment of the effects of a policy intervention) or ‘intermediate evaluation’ (assessment during the period of implementation of a policy intervention).

Second, part of the acceptance of the orthodoxy of culture-led regeneration may be argued to stem in part from a journalistic approach to much cultural policy evaluation (as produced for instance by ‘think-tanks’ [Miles and Paddison, 2005]), linked to the under-theorised endorsement and encouragement of culture-led regeneration based primarily on an (arguably simplistic) economic rationale. While there are broader

debates surrounding the use of the term ‘evidence-based’, with some arguing that an ‘evidence-informed’ approach is more appropriate, this does not negate the concerns that neither approach would appear to have been applied in the case of spatial policy for cultural clustering by means of cultural quarters.

#### *3.4.2 Limited approaches*

The consideration of current literature, including books, journal articles and consultancy reports (as considered in papers one to four) suggests that there has been a lack of research and evidence in relation to spatial planning policy for cultural clustering and cultural quarters which makes use of contextually-situated examples. It is argued in Chapter Two that the use of such approaches, by means of case studies, can provide a valuable means of enhancing understanding of the way in which intended effects are (or are not) achieved in practice. Hence my papers, based on contextually-situated case studies in relation to formal and informal cultural clustering policy and the application of public art within cultural quarters, provide a valuable and original contribution to the wider literature.

#### *3.4.3 Policy relevance*

As indicated above, my papers are clearly policy relevant since they show how policy in relation to cultural quarters and cultural clustering has been widely applied in spite of a lack of clear conceptual or theoretical underpinning that is derived from evidence. Not only does this imply clear policy relevance, but the widespread nature of such policy implies urgency in the need for appropriate evidential underpinning. Again, the lack of evidence highlighted in this respect is specifically in relation to the local spatial planning application of policy (particularly in relation to the designation of cultural quarters), since broader application of cultural policy has been the subject of greater focus in both argument and research.

### **3.5 Critical Reasoning**

In this section, I seek to argue that I have demonstrated powers of critical reasoning. As evidence, I cite papers one to four submitted as part of the thesis, as well as elements of

critical review set out in Chapters Two and Three. Each of the papers has my sole authorship, and each defines its own research questions, sets them in the context of previous research and sets out evidence to answer these questions. Each paper also sets out a clear analysis and interpretation of evidence, and provides a reflection on the answers provided and their contribution to the wider field, including policy implications in other contexts. I submit that such analysis and reflection would not be possible without the application of independent critical reasoning.

Furthermore, the component chapters in this thesis represent my work, and my aim to reflect on my research approach as set out in papers one to four. I have reflected upon and reviewed the scope and content of the papers, as well as the methods used. In addition, I have shown how the final contribution can be set not only in the literature of the field (including that which has arisen since the papers were written) but also as part of wider current policy debates within spatial planning. I submit again that the analysis and reflection that this demonstrates would not be possible without independent critical reasoning.

### **3.6 Conclusions**

In this final section of the thesis, I have two central aims. First, I aim to summarise the findings and discussion against the objectives defined in section 1.2. Second, I aim to summarise the implications of my work for good practice.

#### *3.6.1 Reviewing the Research Objectives*

In this section, I seek to argue that I have fulfilled the component objectives set out previously in the thesis. To do so, I take each of the objectives in turn, as follows.

Objective 1: to assess the adequacy of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks which underpin policy and practice with respect to the content and form of policy in relation to cultural clustering and cultural quarters.

In this respect, papers one and two set out the argument that the existing theoretical and conceptual basis for the content (for instance relating to the consideration of land use

allocation and design) and form (for instance relating to the use of ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ approaches) of policy is inadequate. They argue that the result is widespread confusion over these elements as well as the rationale for, and even defining characteristics of, cultural quarters (as the primary policy mechanism for encouraging cultural use clustering). They link this argument to the consideration of specific cases of policy application, and conclude that the lack of adequate conceptual and theoretical underpinning has contributed to a lack of effectiveness of policy in practice. They add the argument (developed further in paper three) that one of the reasons for the lack of such an underpinning is the serial replication of policy from other contexts, not only in terms of transfer of the content and form of policy, but also in terms of transfer of the notion of the need for such policy, in the absence of clear theoretical and conceptual justification.

Objective 2: to investigate the way in which policy for cultural clustering, as applied for instance in cultural quarters, addresses the issue of local identity.

As indicated above, this is linked to the process by which policy for cultural clustering is derived and applied. This is in turn linked to issues of agency for instance in terms of the (influential) role of cultural intermediaries and consultants, and the (more limited) role of local communities. Paper three focuses on the issue of linkage of identity with respect to cultural quarters. It extends the arguments of papers one and two, in relation to the conceptual and theoretical underpinning for cultural quarters and cultural clustering, by showing how such underpinning needs to take into account the issue of linkage with local identity, since this is critical to the potential achievement of outcomes. The reason for the importance of linkage to local identity in this context arises from the significance of distinctiveness for the longer-term competitiveness of cities, since such distinctiveness is linked in turn to local identity. The paper argues that the serial replication of policy for cultural clustering (as well as related reliance on generic approaches) has led to a lack of reflection of local identity in cases such as Dundee, with implications for the longer-term erosion of distinctiveness.

Objective 3: to review the originality of the work as set out in the published papers, and to demonstrate its significant contribution to the discipline of spatial planning, both in terms of the discovery of new facts and the exercise of independent critical power.

This objective is linked to issues of methodology in terms of the research which forms the basis for the papers. The material relevant to this objective is contained within the published papers as well as in Chapter Two of this thesis. I have argued that the originality of the work as reported in the papers derives in part from the lack of relevant research evidence with respect to the spatial planning application of policy for cultural clustering and cultural quarters. Furthermore, I have argued that the application of contextually-situated case studies can provide a valuable means of explaining the contribution of such policy. There is a lack of such studies at present. For instance, of the references cited at the end of this thesis, only three constitute such contextually-situated case studies which directly address the issue of cultural use clustering (namely Evans [2003]; Miles S [2005]; and Porter and Barber [2007]). Hence such studies can be seen to be relatively limited in number when compared to the wider range of literature with respect to the use of culture as part of regeneration strategies. As set out elsewhere in this thesis, this wider literature addresses the contribution of cultural uses in terms of economic, social or environmental outcomes. However, it does not take account specifically of the issue of the clustering of cultural uses in particular locations within towns and cities, or the way in which spatial planning policy can be used to encourage such clustering.

In view of my contribution via papers one to four, I have demonstrated that this is original (in terms of both focus and approach). I have also demonstrated that this work is significant in its contribution to the discipline of spatial planning. This derives first from the discovery of new facts, in terms of the contextually-situated case studies themselves; and second, from the exercise of independent critical power in terms of the explanation of how and why policy for cultural clustering and cultural quarters is applied, and why it may be argued to be sub-optimal or even counter-productive in terms of longer-term effects and outcomes.

### *3.6.2 Conclusions for good practice*

In the previous discussion, I have demonstrated how my research has made a significant and original contribution to the relevant literature as well as wider policy debates. I have also highlighted earlier in this thesis (including within the papers contained in the thesis) the overall conclusions arising from my research in terms of implications for best practice. It is useful at this point, however, to summarise the more important



conclusions which relate to the development and application of cultural use clustering in terms of cultural quarters. These are set out below.

First, in terms of the development of an underpinning theoretical base, there is a need for clarity in terms of the definition (including necessary characteristics) of ‘cultural quarters’. There is also a need for clarity regarding the aims and potential of cultural quarters. These conclusions are set out in papers one, two and three. More specifically, paper two shows how the differences in approach which can be seen in practice, in terms of cultural clustering policy within spatial planning, are based only in part on differences in context (including scale). Hence different (and contradictory) conceptual frameworks (relating to the basic principles of cultural clustering) are applied in different contexts. This implies a degree of confusion in terms of the potential for cultural quarters to bring about economic, social and environmental objectives. Again, this indicates the need for a more evidence-based approach to policy for cultural clustering.

Second, in terms of the nature and scope of policy, there is a need for policy to be more holistic in orientation in order for broad regeneration outcomes to be achieved. This is particularly important with respect to social aims, which would seem in practice to be accorded less priority than economic aims, as shown in papers one, two and three. More specifically, paper three shows how the dominance of image enhancement (related to aims for city marketing) as a policy driver can mean that local identity is undervalued in policy development, with the potential consequence of (longer term) loss of distinctiveness in the areas concerned. There is also a need for policy to be more differentiated (rather than reductive as at present) so as to reflect local contextual circumstance (including aspects of local identity). This could be achieved by the development of a broader array of possibilities (for different contexts and circumstances) comprising for instance a spectrum of policy encompassing formal and informal; top-down and ‘organic’; and production- and consumption-based approaches. In terms of specific mechanisms, paper four for instance shows how the use of historical associations within public art in cultural quarters can be used to reconcile potentially-contradictory aims for enhancement of city image and reflection of local identity.

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